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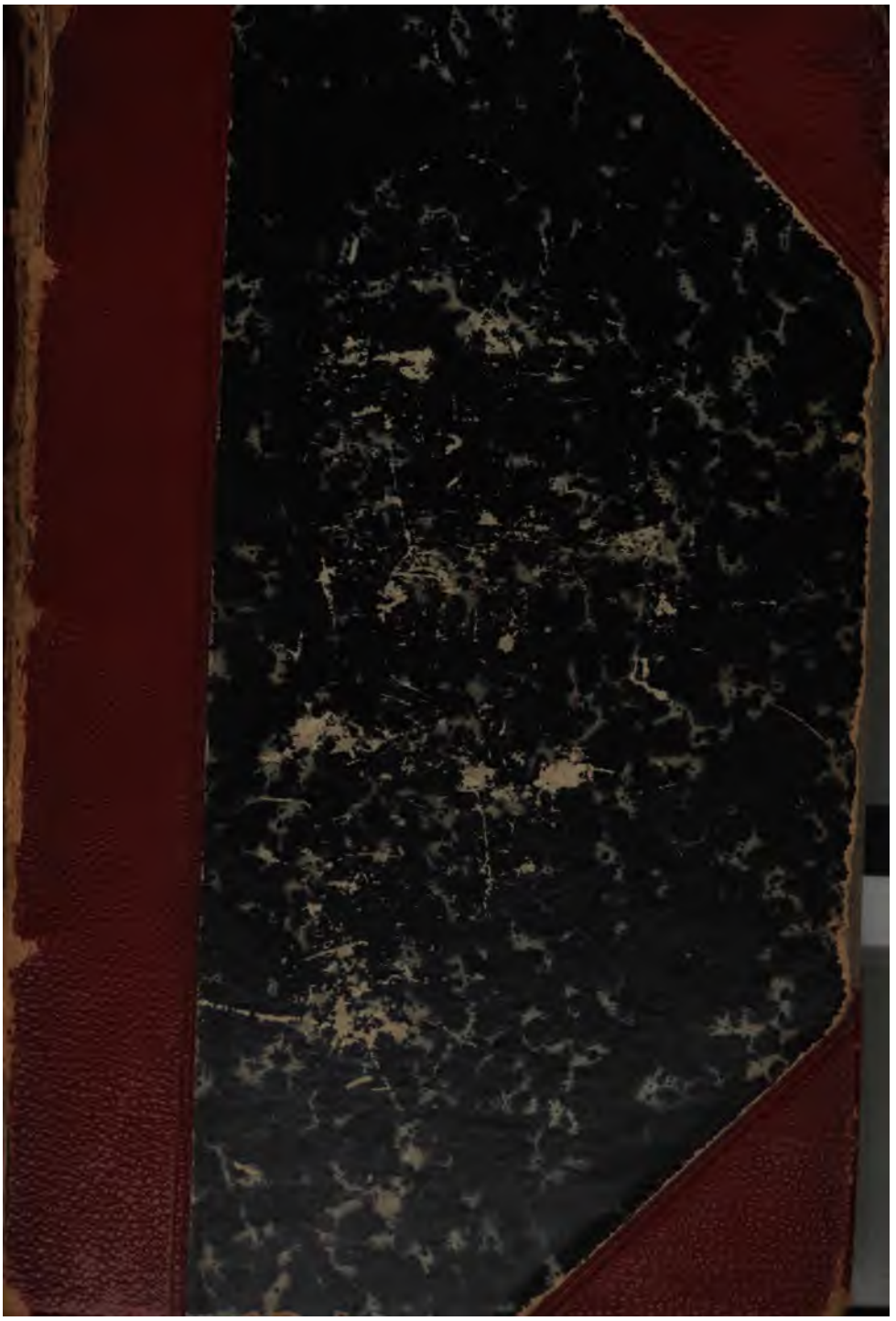

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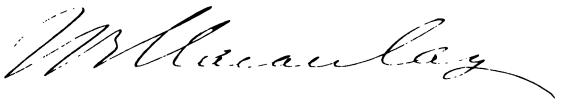

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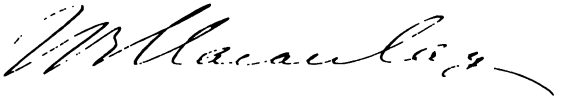

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CRITICAL

AND

MISCELLANEOUS

ESSAYS.

BY

T. BABINGTON MACAULAY.

New and Revised Edition.

VOL. I.

PHILADELPHIA:
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PUBLISHER'S NOTICE.

THE very general and high commendation bestowed by the press and the community upon the American edition of Macaulay's Miscellaneous Writings has induced the publisher to issue a new edition embracing the remainder of the articles in the Edinburgh Review, and several articles written and published while the author was at college.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following volumes contain the miscellaneous writings of Thomas Babington Macaulay, consisting of various essays which have appeared in the English Reviews, principally the Edinburgh, since the year 1825, printed from a list corrected by himself. His articles have been universally admired, both in England and America, for their vivid eloquence, extensive learning, and splendour of illustration; and the publisher has had reason to believe, that a collected edition of them would be received with favour by the American public. It has been his aim to present them in a form worthy of the high merit of their contents.

Mr. Macaulay has not been exclusively occupied with the literary productions which have given him so brilliant a reputation. He has been hardly less distinguished in public life. He came into Parliament shortly before the debates upon the Reform Bill, and his speeches, especially upon that question, were highly eloquent, vigorous, and effective. He resided for some time in India, in a lucrative and responsible official capacity. He returned to England about three years since, and is now a Member of Parliament for

Edinburgh, and is also Secretary at War, which gives him a seat in the cabinet. He is in the prime of life, and we may indulge the hope that the literature of his language may be enriched by further contributions from his pen. Living in another hemisphere, we should regret to see his great powers of varied attainments wholly absorbed in politics—in employments which many others, probably, can discharge as well, and which occupy his time and thoughts to the exclusion of those literary pursuits, in some departments of which no one can dispute the palm with him.

Boston, May, 1840.

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MACAULAY'S MISCELLANIES.

Milton.*

[*Edinburgh Review.*]

TOWARDS the close of the year 1823, Mr. Lemon, Deputy Keeper of the State Papers, in the course of his researches among the presses of his office, met with a large Latin manuscript. With it were found corrected copies of the foreign despatches written by Milton, while he filled the office of Secretary, and several papers relating to the Popish Trials and the Rye-house Plot. The whole was wrapped up in an envelope, superscribed "*To Mr. Skinner, Merchant.*" On examination, the large manuscript proved to be the long lost Essay on the Doctrines of Christianity, which, according to Wood and Toland, Milton finished after the Restoration, and deposited with Cyriac Skinner. Skinner, it is well known, held the same political opinions with his illustrious friend. It is therefore probable, as Mr. Lemon conjectures, that he may have fallen under the suspicions of the government during that persecution of the Whigs which followed the dissolution of the Oxford Parliament, and that, in consequence of a general seizure of his papers, this work may have been brought to the office in which it had been found. But

* *Joannis Miltoni, Angli, de Doctrina Christiana libri duo posthumi.* A Treatise on Christian Doctrine, compiled from the Holy Scriptures alone. By JOHN MILTON. Translated from the original by Charles R. Sumner, M. A., &c. &c. 1825.

whatever the adventures of the manuscript may have been, no doubt can exist, that it is a genuine relic of the great poet.

Mr. Sumner, who was commanded by his majesty to edit and translate the treatise, has acquitted himself of this task in a manner honourable to his talents and to his character. His version is not indeed very easy or elegant; but it is entitled to the praise of clearness and fidelity. His notes abound with interesting quotations, and have the rare merit of really elucidating the text. The preface is evidently the work of a sensible and candid man, firm in his own religious opinions, and tolerant towards those of others.

The book itself will not add much to the fame of Milton. It is, like all his Latin works, well written—though not exactly in the style of the Prize Essays of Oxford and Cambridge. There is no elaborate imitation of classical antiquity, no scrupulous purity, none of the ceremonial cleanness which characterizes the diction of our academical Pharisees. He does not attempt to polish and brighten his composition into the Ciceronian gloss and brilliancy. He does not, in short, sacrifice sense and spirit to pedantic refinements. The nature of his subject compelled him to use many words

"That would have made Quintilian stare and gasp."

But he writes with as much ease and freedom as if Latin were his mother tongue; and where he is least happy, his failure seems to arise from the carelessness of a native, not from the ignorance of a foreigner. What Denham with felicity says of Crowley, may be applied to him. He wears the garb, but not the clothes, of the ancients.

Throughout the volume are discernible the traces of a powerful and independent mind, emancipated from the influence of authority, and devoted to the search of truth. He professes to form his system from the Bible alone; and his digest of Scriptural texts is certainly among the best that have appeared. But he is not always so happy in his inferences as in his citations.

Some of the heterodox opinions which he avows seem to have excited considerable amazement: particularly his Arianism, and his notions on the subject of polygamy. Yet we can scarcely conceive that any person could have read the

Paradise Lost without suspecting him of the former; nor do we think that any reader, acquainted with the history of his life, ought to be much startled at the latter. The opinions which he has expressed respecting the nature of the Deity, the eternity of matter, and the observation of the Sabbath, might, we think, have caused more just surprise.

But we will not go into the discussion of these points. The book, were it far more orthodox, or far more heretical than it is, would not much edify or corrupt the present generation. The men of our time are not to be converted or perverted by quartos. A few more days, and this Essay will follow the *Defensio Populi* to the dust and silence of the upper shelf. The name of its author, and the remarkable circumstances attending its publication, will secure to it a certain degree of attention. For a month or two, it will occupy a few minutes of chat in every drawing-room, and a few columns in every magazine; and it will then, to borrow the elegant language of the play-bills, be withdrawn, to make room for the forthcoming novelties.

We wish, however, to avail ourselves of the interest, transient as it may be, which this work has excited. The dexterous Capuchins never choose to preach on the life and miracles of a saint, till they have awakened the devotional feelings of their auditors, by exhibiting some relic of him —a thread of his garment, a lock of his hair, or a drop of his blood. On the same principle, we intend to take advantage of the late interesting discovery, and, while this memorial of a great and good man is still in the hands of all, to say something of his moral and intellectual qualities. Nor, we are convinced, will the severest of our readers blame us if, on an occasion like the present, we turn for a short time from the topics of the day, to commemorate, in all love and reverence, the genius and virtues of John Milton, the poet, the statesman, the philosopher, the glory of English literature, the champion and the martyr of English liberty.

It is by his poetry that Milton is best known; and it is of his poetry that we wish first to speak. By the general suffrage of the civilized world, his place has been assigned among the greatest masters of the art. His detractors, however, though out-voted, have not been silenced. There are many critics, and some of great name, who contrive, in the

same breath, to extol the poems and to decry the poet. The works, they acknowledge, considered in themselves, may be classed among the noblest productions of the human mind. But they will not allow the author to rank with those great men who, born in the infancy of civilization, supplied, by their own powers, the want of instruction, and, though destitute of models themselves, bequeathed to posterity models which defy imitation. Milton, it is said, inherited what his predecessors created; he lived in an enlightened age; he received a finished education; and we must, therefore, if we would form a just estimate of his powers, make large deductions for these advantages.

We venture to say, on the contrary, paradoxical as the remark may appear, that no poet has ever had to struggle with more unfavourable circumstances than Milton. He doubted, as he has himself owned, whether he had not been born "an age too late." For this notion Johnson has thought fit to make him the butt of his clumsy ridicule. The poet, we believe, understood the nature of his art better than the critic. He knew that his poetical genius derived no advantage from the civilization which surrounded him or from the learning which he had acquired: and he looked back with something like regret to the ruder age of simple words and vivid impressions.

We think that, as civilization advances, poetry almost necessarily declines. Therefore, though we admire those great works of imagination which have appeared in dark ages, we do not admire them the more because they have appeared in dark ages. On the contrary, we hold that the most wonderful and splendid proof of genius is a great poem produced in a civilized age. We cannot understand why those who believe in that most othodox article of literary faith, that the earliest poets are generally the best, should wonder at the rule, as if it were the exception. Surely, the uniformity of the phenomenon indicates a corresponding uniformity in the cause.

The fact is, that common observers reason from the progress of the experimental sciences to that of the imitative arts. The improvement of the former is gradual and slow. Ages are spent in collecting materials, ages more in separating and combining them. Even when a system has been

formed, there is still something to add, to alter, or to reject. Every generation enjoys the use of a vast hoard bequeathed to it by antiquity, and transmits it, augmented by fresh acquisitions, to future ages. In these pursuits, therefore, the first speculators lie under great disadvantages, and, even when they fail, are entitled to praise. Their pupils, with far inferior intellectual powers, speedily surpass them in actual attainments. Every girl who has read Mrs. Marcet's little Dialogues on Political Economy, could teach Montague or Walpole many lessons in finance. Any intelligent man may now, by resolutely applying himself for a few years to mathematics, learn more than the great Newton knew after half a century of study and meditation.

But it is not thus with music, with painting, or with sculpture. Still less is it thus with poetry. The progress of refinement rarely supplies these arts with better objects of imitation. It may, indeed, improve the instruments which are necessary to the mechanical operations of the musician, the sculptor, and the painter. But language, the machine of the poet, is best fitted for his purpose in its rudest state. Nations, like individuals, first perceive, and then abstract. They advance from particular images to general terms. Hence, the vocabulary of an enlightened society is philosophical, that of a half-civilized people is poetical.

This change in the language of men is partly the cause, and partly the effect of a corresponding change in the nature of their intellectual operations; a change by which science gains, and poetry loses. Generalization is necessary to the advancement of knowledge, but particularly in the creations of the imagination. In proportion as men know more, and think more, they look less at individuals and more at classes. They therefore make better theories, and worse poems. They give us vague phrases instead of images, and personified qualities instead of men. They may be better able to analyze human nature than their predecessors. But analysis is not the business of the poet. His office is to portray, not to dissect. He may believe in a moral sense, like Shaftesbury. He may refer all human actions to self-interest, like Helvetius, or he may never think about the matter at all. His creed on such subjects will no more

influence his poetry, properly so called, than the notions which a painter may have conceived respecting the lachrymal glands, or the circulation of the blood, will affect the tears of his Niobe, or the blushes of his Aurora. If Shakspeare had written a book on the motives of human actions, it is by no means certain that it would have been a good one. It is extremely improbable that it would have contained half so much able reasoning on the subject as is to be found in the "Fable of the Bees." But could Mandeville have created an Iago? Well as he knew how to resolve characters into their elements, would he have been able to combine those elements in such a manner as to make up a man—a real, living, individual man?

Perhaps no man can be a poet, or can even enjoy poetry, without a certain unsoundness of mind, if any thing which gives so much pleasure ought to be called unsoundness. By poetry we mean, not of course all writing in verse, nor even all good writing in verse. Our definition excludes many metrical compositions which, on other grounds, deserve the highest praise. By poetry we mean, the art of employing words in such a manner as to produce an illusion on the imagination: the art of doing by means of words what the painter does by means of colours. Thus the greatest of poets has described it, in lines universally admired for the vigour and felicity of their diction, and still more valuable on account of the just notion which they convey of the art in which he excelled:

> "As imagination bodies forth
> The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
> Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
> A local habitation and a name."

These are the fruits of the "fine frenzy" which he ascribes to the poet—a fine frenzy doubtless, but still a frenzy. Truth, indeed, is essential to poetry; but it is the truth of madness. The reasonings are just; but the premises are false. After the first suppositions have been made, every thing ought to be consistent; but those first suppositions require a degree of credulity which almost amounts to a partial and temporary derangement of the intellect. Hence, of all people, children are the most imaginative. They abandon themselves without reserve to every illusion.

Every image which is strongly presented to their mental eye produces on them the effect of reality. No man, whatever his sensibility may be, is ever affected by Hamlet or Lear, as a little girl is affected by the story of poor Red Riding-hood. She knows that it is all false, that wolves cannot speak, that there are no wolves in England. Yet in spite of her knowledge she believes; she weeps, she trembles; she dares not go into a dark room lest she should feel the teeth of the monster at her throat. Such is the despotism of the imagination over uncultivated minds.

In a rude state of society, men are children with a greater variety of ideas. It is therefore in such a state of society that we may expect to find the poetical temperament in its highest perfection. In an enlightened age, there will be much intelligence, much science, much philosophy, abundance of just classification and subtle analysis, abundance of wit and eloquence, abundance of verses, and even of good ones—but little poetry. Men will judge and compare; but they will not create. They will talk about the old poets, and comment on them, and to a certain degree enjoy them. But they will scarcely be able to conceive the effect which poetry produced on their ruder ancestors, the agony, the ecstasy, the plenitude of belief. The Greek Rhapsodists, according to Plato, could not recite Homer without almost falling into convulsions.* The Mohawk hardly feels the scalping-knife while he shouts his death-song. The power which the ancient bards of Wales and Germany exercised over their auditors seems to modern readers almost miraculous. Such feelings are very rare in a civilized community, and most rare among those who participate most in its improvements. They linger longest among the peasantry.

Poetry produces an illusion on the eye of the mind, as a magic lantern produces an illusion on the eye of the body. And, as a magic lantern acts best in a dark room, poetry effects its purpose most completely in a dark age. As the light of knowledge breaks in upon its exhibitions, as the outlines of certainty become more and more definite, and the shades of probability more and more distinct, the hues and lineaments of the phantoms which it calls up grow

* See the Dialogue between Socrates and Io.

fainter and fainter. We cannot unite the incompatible advantages of reality and deception, the clear discernment of truth and the exquisite enjoyment of fiction.

He who, in an enlightened and literary society, aspires to be a great poet, must first become a little child. He must take to pieces the whole web of his mind. He must unlearn much of that knowledge which has perhaps constituted hitherto his chief title of superiority. His very talents will be a hinderance to him. His difficulties will be proportioned to his proficiency in the pursuits which are fashionable among his contemporaries; and that proficiency will in general be proportioned to the vigour and activity of his mind. And it is well, if, after all his sacrifices and exertions, his works do not resemble a lisping man, or a modern ruin. We have seen, in our own time, great talents, intense labour, and long meditation, employed in this struggle against the spirit of the age, and employed, we will not say, absolutely in vain, but with dubious success and feeble applause.

If these reasonings be just, no poet has ever triumphed over greater difficulties than Milton. He received a learned education. He was a profound and elegant classical scholar: he had studied all the mysteries of Rabbinical literature: he was intimately acquainted with every language of modern Europe, from which either pleasure or information was then to be derived. He was perhaps the only great poet of later times who has been distinguished by the excellence of his Latin verse. The genius of Petrarch was scarcely of the first order; and his poems in the ancient language, though much praised by those who have never read them, are wretched compositions. Cowley, with all his admirable wit and ingenuity, had little imagination; nor indeed do we think his classical diction comparable to that of Milton. The authority of Johnson is against us on this point. But Johnson had studied the bad writers of the middle ages till he had become utterly insensible to the Augustan elegance, and was as ill qualified to judge between two Latin styles as an habitual drunkard to set up for a wine-taster.

Versification in a dead language is an exotic, a far-fetched, costly, sickly imitation of that which elsewhere may be

found in healthful and spontaneous perfection. The soils on which this rarity flourishes are in general as ill suited to the production of vigorous native poetry, as the flower-pots of a hot-house to the growth of oaks. That the author of the Paradise Lost should have written the Epistle to Manso, was truly wonderful. Never before were such marked originality and such exquisite mimicry found together. Indeed, in all the Latin poems of Milton, the artificial manner indispensable to such works is admirably preserved, while, at the same time, the richness of his fancy and the elevation of his sentiments give to them a peculiar charm, an air of nobleness and freedom, which distinguishes them from all other writings of the same class. They remind us of the amusements of those angelic warriors who composed the cohort of Gabriel:

> "About him exercised heroic games
> The unarmed youth of heaven. But o'er their heads
> Celestial armory, shield, helm, and spear,
> Hung bright, with diamond flaming and with gold."

We cannot look upon the sportive exercises for which the genius of Milton ungirds itself, without catching a glimpse of the gorgeous and terrible panoply which it is accustomed to wear. The strength of his imagination triumphed over every obstacle. So intense and ardent was the fire of his mind, that it not only was not suffocated beneath the weight of its fuel, but penetrated the whole superincumbent mass with its own heat and radiance.

It is not our intention to attempt any thing like a complete examination of the poetry of Milton. The public has long been agreed as to the merit of the most remarkable passages, the incomparable harmony of the numbers, and the excellence of that style which no rival has been able to equal, and no parodist to degrade, which displays in their highest perfection the idiomatic powers of the English tongue, and to which every ancient and every modern language has contributed something of grace, of energy, or of music. In the vast field of criticism in which we are entering, innumerable reapers have already put their sickles. Yet the harvest is so abundant that the negligent search of a straggling gleaner may be rewarded with a sheaf.

The most striking characteristic of the poetry of Milton is the extreme remoteness of the associations by means of which it acts on the reader. Its effect is produced, not so much by what it expresses, as by what it suggests; not so much by the ideas which it directly conveys, as by other ideas which are connected with them. He electrifies the mind through conductors. The most unimaginative man must understand the Iliad. Homer gives him no choice, and requires from him no exertion; but takes the whole upon himself, and sets his images in so clear a light that it is impossible to be blind to them. The works of Milton cannot be comprehended or enjoyed, unless the mind of the reader co-operate with that of the writer. He does not paint a finished picture, or play for a mere passive listener. He sketches, and leaves others to fill up the outline. He strikes the key-note, and expects his hearer to make out the melody.

We often hear of the magical influence of poetry. The expression in general means nothing; but, applied to the writings of Milton, it is most appropriate. His poetry acts like an incantation. Its merit lies less in its obvious meaning than in its occult power. There would seem, at first sight, to be no more in his words than in other words. But they are words of enchantment; no sooner are they pronounced than the past is present, and the distant near. New forms of beauty start at once into existence, and all the burial-places of the memory give up their dead. Change the structure of the sentence, substitute one synonyme for another, and the whole effect is destroyed. The spell loses its power: and he who should then hope to conjure with it, would find himself as much mistaken as Cassim, in the Arabian tale, when he stood crying, "Open Wheat," "Open Barley," to the door which obeyed no sound but "Open Sesame!" The miserable failure of Dryden, in his attempt to rewrite some parts of the Paradise Lost, is a remarkable instance of this.

In support of these observations we may remark, that scarcely any passages in the poems of Milton are more generally known, or more frequently repeated, than those which are little more than muster-rolls of names. They are not always more appropriate or more melodious than other names. But they are charmed names. Every one

of them is the first link in a long chain of associated ideas. Like the dwelling-place of our infancy revisited in manhood, like a song of our country heard in a strange land, they produce upon us an effect wholly independent of their intrinsic value. One transports us back to a remote period of history. Another places us among the moral scenery and manners of a distant country. A third evokes all the dear classical recollections of childhood, the school-room, the dog-eared Virgil, the holiday, and the prize. A fourth brings before us the splendid phantoms of chivalrous romance, the trophied lists, the embroidered housings, the quaint devices, the haunted forests, the enchanted gardens, the achievements of enamoured knights, and the smiles of rescued princesses.

In none of the works of Milton is his peculiar manner more happily displayed than in the Allegro and the Penseroso. It is impossible to conceive that the mechanism of language can be brought to a more exquisite degree of perfection. These poems differ from others as ottar of roses differs from ordinary rose-water, the close-packed essence from the thin diluted mixture. They are indeed not so much poems, as collections of hints, from each of which the reader is to make out a poem for himself. Every epithet is a text for a canto.

The Comus and the Samson Agonistes are works which, though of very different merit, offer some marked points of resemblance. They are both lyric poems in the form of plays. There are perhaps no two kinds of composition so essentially dissimilar as the drama and the ode. The business of the dramatist is to keep himself out of sight, and to let nothing appear but his characters. As soon as he attracts notice to his personal feelings, the illusion is broken. The effect is as unpleasant as that which is produced on the stage by the voice of a prompter, or the entrance of a scene-shifter. Hence it was that the tragedies of Byron were his least successful performances. They resemble those pasteboard pictures invented by the friend of children, Mr. Newberry, in which a single movable head goes around twenty different bodies; so that the same face looks out upon us successively, from the uniform of a hussar, the furs of a judge, and the rags of a beggar. In

all the characters, patriots and tyrants, haters and lovers, the frown and sneer of Harold were discernible in an instant. But this species of egotism, though fatal to the drama, is the inspiration of the ode. It is the part of the lyric poet to abandon himself, without reserve, to his own emotions.

Between these hostile elements many great men have endeavoured to effect an amalgamation, but never with complete success. The Greek drama, on the model of which the Samson was written, sprung from the ode. The dialogue was ingrafted on the chorus, and naturally partook of its character. The genius of the greatest of the Athenian dramatists co-operated with the circumstances under which tragedy made its first appearance. Æschylus was head and heart a lyric poet. In his time, the Greeks had far more intercourse with the East than in the days of Homer; and they had not yet acquired that immense superiority in war, in science, and in the arts, which, in the following generation, led them to treat the Asiatics with contempt. From the narrative of Herodotus, it should seem that they still looked up, with the veneration of disciples, to Egypt and Assyria. At this period, accordingly, it was natural that the literature of Greece should be tinctured with the oriental style. And that style, we think, is clearly discernible in the works of Pindar and Æschylus. The latter often reminds us of the Hebrew writers. The book of Job, indeed, in conduct and diction, bears a considerable resemblance to some of his dramas. Considered as plays, his works are absurd: considered as choruses, they are above all praise. If, for instance, we examine the address of Clytemnestra to Agamemnon on his return, or the description of the seven Argive chiefs, by the principles of dramatic writing, we shall instantly condemn them as monstrous. But, if we forget the characters, and think only of the poetry, we shall admit that it has never been surpassed in energy and magnificence. Sophocles made the Greek drama as dramatic as was consistent with its original form. His portraits of men have a sort of similarity; but it is the similarity, not of a painting, but of a bas-relief. It suggests a resemblance; but it does not produce an illusion. Euripides attempted to carry the

reform further. But it was a task far beyond his powers, perhaps beyond any powers. Instead of correcting what was bad, he destroyed what was excellent. He substituted crutches for stilts, bad sermons for good odes.

Milton, it is well known, admired Euripides highly; much more highly than, in our opinion, he deserved. Indeed, the caresses, which this partiality leads him to bestow on "sad Electra's poet," sometimes reminds us of the beautiful Queen of Fairy-land kissing the long ears of Bottom. At all events, there can be no doubt that this veneration for the Athenian, whether just or not, was injurious to the Samson Agonistes. Had he taken Æschylus for his model, he would have given himself up to the lyric inspiration, and poured out profusely all the treasures of his mind, without bestowing a thought on those dramatic proprieties which the nature of the work rendered it impossible to preserve. In the attempt to reconcile things in their own nature inconsistent, he has failed, as every one must have failed. We cannot identify ourselves with the characters, as in a good play. We cannot identify ourselves with the poet, as in a good ode. The conflicting ingredients, like an acid and an alkali mixed, neutralize each other. We are by no means insensible to the merits of this celebrated piece, to the severe dignity of the style, the graceful and pathetic solemnity of the opening speech, or the wild and barbaric melody which gives so striking an effect to the choral passages. But we think it, we confess, the least successful effort of the genius of Milton.

The Comus is framed on the model of the Italian masque, as the Samson is framed on the model of the Greek tragedy. It is, certainly, the noblest performance of the kind which exists in any language. It is as far superior to the Faithful Shepherdess, as the Faithful Shepherdess is to the Aminta, or the Aminta to the Pastor Fido. It was well for Milton that he had here no Euripides to mislead him. He understood and loved the literature of modern Italy. But he did not feel for it the same veneration which he entertained for the remains of Athenian and Roman poetry, consecrated by so many lofty and endearing recollections. The faults, moreover, of his Italian predecessors were of a kind to which his mind had a deadly antipathy. He could stoop to a plain style, sometimes even to a bald style; but false

brilliancy was his utter aversion. His muse had no objection to a russet attire; but she turned with disgust from the finery of Guarini, as tawdry and as paltry as the rags of a chimney-sweeper on May-day. Whatever ornaments *she* wears are of massive gold, not only dazzling to the sight, but capable of standing the severest test of the crucible.

Milton attended in the Comus to the distinction which he neglected in the Samson. He made it what it ought to be, essentially lyrical, and dramatic only in semblance. He has not attempted a fruitless struggle against a defect inherent in the nature of that species of composition; and he has, therefore, succeeded, wherever success was not impossible. The speeches must be read as majestic soliloquies; and he who so reads them will be enraptured with their eloquence, their sublimity, and their music. The interruptions of the dialogue, however, impose a constraint upon the writer, and break the illusion of the reader. The finest passages are those which are lyric in form as well as in spirit. "I should much commend," says the excellent Sir Henry Wotton, in a letter to Milton, "the tragical part, if the lyrical did not ravish me with a certain dorique delicacy in your songs and odes, whereunto, I most plainly confess to you, I have seen yet nothing parallel in our language." The criticism was just. It is when Milton escapes from the shackles of the dialogue, when he is discharged from the labour of uniting two incongruous styles, when he is at liberty to indulge his choral raptures without reserve, that he rises even above himself. Then, like his own Good Genius, bursting from the earthly form and weeds of Thyrsis, he stands forth in celestial freedom and beauty; he seems to cry exultingly,

> "Now my task is smoothly done,
> I can fly or I can run,"

to skim the earth, to soar above the clouds, to bathe in the Elysian dew of the rainbow, and to inhale the balmy smells of nard and cassia, which the musky winds of the zephyr scatter through the cedared alleys of the Hesperides.*

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* "There eternal summer dwells,
And west winds with musky wing,
About the cedared alleys fling
Nard and cassia's balmy smells:

There are several of the minor poems of Milton on which we would willingly make a few remarks. Still more willingly would we enter into a detailed examination of that admirable poem, the Paradise Regained, which, strangely enough, is scarcely ever mentioned, except as an instance of the blindness of that parental affection which men of letters bear towards the offspring of their intellects. That Milton was mistaken in preferring this work, excellent as it is, to the Paradise Lost, we must readily admit. But we are sure that the superiority of the Paradise Lost to the Paradise Regained is not more decided, than the superiority of the Paradise Regained to every poem which has since made its appearance. But our limits prevent us from discussing the point at length. We hasten on to that extraordinary production, which the general suffrage of critics has placed in the highest class of human compositions.

The only poem of modern times which can be compared with the Paradise Lost, is the Divine Comedy. The subject of Milton, in some points, resembled that of Dante; but he has treated it in a widely different manner. We cannot, we think, better illustrate our opinion respecting our own great poet, than by contrasting him with the father of Tuscan literature.

The poetry of Milton differs from that of Dante, as the hieroglyphics of Egypt differed from the picture-writing of Mexico. The images which Dante employs speak for themselves:—they stand simply for what they are. Those of Milton have a signification which is often discernible only to the initiated. Their value depends less on what they directly represent, than on what they remotely suggest. However strange, however grotesque may be the appear-

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Iris there with humid bow
Waters the odorous banks, that blow
Flowers of more mingled hue
Than her purfled scarf can show,
And drenches with Elysian dew
(List, mortals, if your ears be true)
Beds of hyacinths and roses
Where young Adonis oft reposes,
Waxing well of his deep wound."

ance which Dante undertakes to describe, he never shrinks from describing it. He gives us the shape, the colour, the sound, the smell, the taste; he counts the numbers; he measures the size. His similes are the illustrations of a traveller. Unlike those of other poets, and especially of Milton, they are introduced in a plain, business-like manner; not for the sake of any beauty in the objects from which they are drawn, not for the sake of any ornament which they may impart to the poem, but simply in order to make the meaning of the writer as clear to the reader as it is to himself. The ruins of the precipice which led from the sixth to the seventh circle of hell, were like those of the rock which fell into the Adige on the south of Trent. The cataract of Phlegethon was like that of Aqua Cheta at the monastery of St. Benedict. The place where the heretics were confined in burning tombs resembled the vast cemetery of Arles!

Now, let us compare with the exact details of Dante the dim intimations of Milton. We will cite a few examples. The English poet has never thought of taking the measure of Satan. He gives us merely a vague idea of vast bulk. In one passage the fiend lies stretched out, huge in length, floating many a rood, equal in size to the earth-born enemies of Jove, or to the sea-monster which the mariner mistakes for an island. When he addresses himself to battle against the guardian angels, he stands like Teneriffe or Atlas; his stature reaches the sky. Contrast with these descriptions the lines in which Dante has described the gigantic spectre of Nimrod. "His face seemed to me as long and as broad as the ball of St. Peter's at Rome; and his other limbs were in proportion; so that the bank, which concealed him from the waist downwards, nevertheless showed so much of him, that three tall Germans would in vain have attempted to reach his hair." We are sensible that we do no justice to the admirable style of the Florentine poet. But Mr. Cary's translation is not at hand, and our version, however rude, is sufficient to illustrate our meaning.

Once more, compare the lazar-house, in the eleventh book of the Paradise Lost, with the last ward of Malebolge in Dante. Milton avoids the loathsome details, and takes refuge

in indistinct, but solemn and tremendous imagery—Despair hurrying from couch to couch, to mock the wretches with his attendance: Death shaking his dart over them, but, in spite of supplications, delaying to strike. What says Dante? "There was such a moan there as there would be if all the sick, who, between July and September, are in the hospitals of Valdichiana, and of the Tuscan swamps, and of Sardinia, were in one pit together; and such a stench was issuing forth as is wont to issue from decayed limbs."

We will not take upon ourselves the invidious office of settling precedency between two such writers. Each in his own department is incomparable; and each, we may remark, has, wisely or fortunately, taken a subject adapted to exhibit his peculiar talent to the greatest advantage. The Divine Comedy is a personal narrative. Dante is the eye-witness and ear-witness of that which he relates. He is the very man who has heard the tormented spirits crying out for the second death; who has read the dusky characters on the portal, within which there is no hope; who has hidden his face from the terrors of the Gorgon; who has fled from the hooks and the seething pitch of Barbariccia and Diaghignazzo. His own hands have grasped the shaggy sides of Lucifer. His own feet have climbed the mountain of expiation. His own brow has been marked by the purifying angel. The reader would throw aside such a tale in incredulous disgust, unless it were told with the strongest air of veracity, with a sobriety even in its horrors, with the greatest precision and multiplicity in its details. The narrative of Milton in this respect differs from that of Dante, as the adventures of Amidas differ from those of Gulliver. The author of Amidas would have made his book ridiculous if he had introduced those minute particulars which give such a charm to the work of Swift, the nautical observations, the affected delicacy about names, the official documents transcribed at full length, and all the unmeaning gossip and scandal of the court, springing out of nothing, and tending to nothing. We are not shocked at being told that a man who lived, nobody knows when, saw many very strange sights, and we can easily abandon ourselves to the illusion of the romance. But when Lemuel Gulliver, surgeon, now actually resident at Rotherhithe, tells us of pig-

mies and giants, flying islands and philosophizing horses, nothing but such circumstantial touches could produce, for a single moment, a deception on the imagination.

Of all the poets who have introduced into their works the agency of supernatural beings, Milton has succeeded best. Here Dante decidedly yields to him. And as this is a point on which many rash and ill-considered judgments have been pronounced, we feel inclined to dwell on it a little longer. The most fatal error which a poet can possibly commit in the management of his machinery, is that of attempting to philosophize too much. Milton has been often censured for ascribing to spirits many functions of which spirits must be incapable. But these objections, though sanctioned by eminent names, originate, we venture to say, in profound ignorance of the art of poetry.

What is spirit? What are our own minds, the portion of spirit with which we are best acquainted? We observe certain phenomena. We cannot explain them into material causes. We therefore infer that there exists something which is not material. But of this something we have no idea. We can define it only by negatives. We can reason about it only by symbols. We use the word, but we have no image of the thing: and the business of poetry is with images, and not with words. The poet uses words indeed; but they are merely the instruments of his art, not its objects. They are the materials which he is to dispose in such a manner as to present a picture to the mental eye. And, if they are not so disposed, they are no more entitled to be called poetry, than a bale of canvass and a box of colours are to be called a painting.

Logicians may reason about abstractions; but the great mass of mankind can never feel an interest in them. They must have images. The strong tendency of the multitude in all ages and nations to idolatry can be explained on no other principle. The first inhabitants of Greece, there is every reason to believe, worshipped one invisible Deity. But the necessity of having something more definite to adore, produced, in a few centuries, the innumerable crowd of gods and goddesses. In like manner the ancient Persians thought it impious to exhibit the Creator under a human form. Yet even these transferred to the sun the

worship which, speculatively, they considered due only to the Supreme mind. The history of the Jews is the record of a continual struggle between pure Theism, supported by the most terrible sanctions, and the strangely fascinating desire of having some visible and tangible object of adoration. Perhaps none of the secondary causes which Gibbon has assigned for the rapidity with which Christianity spread over the world, while Judaism scarcely ever acquired a proselyte, operated more powerfully than this feeling. God, the uncreated, the incomprehensible, the invisible, attracted few worshippers. A philosopher might admire so noble a conception; but the crowd turned away in disgust from words which presented no image to their minds. It was before Deity, embodied in a human form, walking among men, partaking of their infirmities, leaning on their bosoms, weeping over their graves, slumbering in the manger, bleeding on the cross, that the prejudices of the Synagogue, and the doubts of the Academy, and the pride of the Portico, and the fasces of the lictor, and the swords of thirty Legions, were humbled in the dust! Soon after Christianity had achieved its triumph, the principle which had assisted it began to corrupt. It became a new paganism. Patron saints assumed the offices of household gods. St. George took the place of Mars. St. Elmo consoled the mariner for the loss of Castor and Pollux. The Virgin Mother and Cecilia succeeded to Venus and the Muses. The fascination of sex and loveliness was again joined to that of celestial dignity; and the homage of chivalry was blended with that of religion. Reformers have often made a stand against these feelings; but never with more than apparent and partial success. The men who demolished the images in cathedrals, have not always been able to demolish those which were enshrined in their minds. It would not be difficult to show, that in politics the same rule holds good. Doctrines, we are afraid, must generally be *embodied* before they can excite strong public feeling. The multitude is more easily interested for the most unmeaning badge, or the most insignificant name, than for the most important principle.

From these considerations we infer, that no poet who should affect that metaphysical accuracy for the want of which Milton has been blamed, would escape a disgraceful

failure. Still, however, there was another extreme, which, though far less dangerous, was also to be avoided. The imaginations of men are in a great measure under the control of their opinions. The most exquisite art of a poetical colouring can produce no illusion when it is employed to represent that which is at once perceived to be incongruous and absurd. Milton wrote in an age of philosophers and theologians. It was necessary therefore for him to abstain from giving such a shock to their understanding, as might break the charm which it was his object to throw over their imaginations. This is the real explanation of the indistinctness and inconsistency with which he has often been reproached. Dr. Johnson acknowledges, that it was absolutely necessary for him to clothe his spirits with material forms. "But," says he, "he should have secured the consistency of his system, by keeping immateriality out of sight, and seducing the reader to drop it from his thoughts." This is easily said; but what if he could not seduce the reader to drop it from *his* thoughts? What if the contrary opinion had taken so full a possession of the minds of men, as to leave no room even for the *quasi-belief* which poetry requires? Such we suspect to have been the case. It was impossible for the poet to adopt altogether the material or the immaterial system. He therefore took his stand on the debatable ground. He left the whole in ambiguity. He has doubtless by so doing laid himself open to the charge of inconsistency. But, though philosophically in the wrong, we cannot but believe that he was poetically in the right. This task, which almost any other writer would have found impracticable, was easy to him. The peculiar art which he possessed of communicating his meaning circuitously, through a long succession of associated ideas, and of intimating more than he expressed, enabled him to disguise those incongruities which he could not avoid.

Poetry, which relates to the beings of another world, ought to be at once mysterious and picturesque. That of Milton is so. That of Dante is picturesque, indeed, beyond any that was ever written. Its effect approaches to that produced by the pencil or the chisel. But it is picturesque to the exclusion of all mystery. This is a fault indeed on the right side, a fault inseparable from the plan of his poem, which,

as we have already observed, rendered the utmost accuracy of description necessary. Still it is a fault. His supernatural agents excite an interest; but it is not the interest which is proper to supernatural agents. We feel that we could talk with his ghosts and demons, without any emotions of unearthly awe. We could, like Don Juan, ask them to supper, and eat heartily in their company. His angels are good men with wings. His devils are spiteful, ugly executioners. His dead men are merely living men in strange situations. The scene which passes between the poet and Facinata is justly celebrated. Still, Facinata in the burning tomb is exactly what Facinata would have been at an *auto da fé*. Nothing can be more touching than the first interview of Dante and Beatrice. Yet what is it, but a lovely woman chiding, with sweet austere composure, the lover for whose affections she is grateful, but whose vices she reprobates? The feelings which give the passage its charm would suit the streets of Florence as well as the summit of the Mount of Purgatory.

The Spirits of Milton are unlike those of almost all other writers. His fiends in particular are wonderful creations. They are not metaphysical abstractions. They are not wicked men. They are not ugly beasts. They have no horns, no tails, none of the fee-faw-fum of Tasso and Klopstock. They have just enough in common with human nature to be intelligible to human beings. Their characters are, like their forms, marked by a certain dim resemblance to those of men, but exaggerated to gigantic dimensions and veiled in mysterious gloom.

Perhaps the gods and demons of Æschylus may best bear a comparison with the angels and devils of Milton. The style of the Athenian had, as we have remarked, something of the vagueness and tenor of the oriental character; and the same peculiarity may be traced in his mythology. It has nothing of the amenity and elegance which we generally find in the superstitions of Greece. All is rugged, barbaric, and colossal. His legends seem to harmonize less with the fragrant groves and graceful porticos, in which his countrymen paid their vows to the God of Light and Goddess of Desire, than with those huge and grotesque labyrinths of eternal granite, in which Egypt enshrined

her mystic Osiris, or in which Hindostan still bows down to her seven-headed idols. His favourite gods are those of the elder generations—the sons of heaven and earth, compared with whom Jupiter himself was a stripling and an upstart—the gigantic Titans and the inexorable Furies. Foremost among his creations of this class stands Prometheus, half fiend, half redeemer, the friend of man, the sullen and implacable enemy of heaven. He bears undoubtedly a considerable resemblance to the Satan of Milton. In both we find the same impatience of control, the same ferocity, the same unconquerable pride. In both characters also are mingled, though in very different proportions, some kind and generous feelings. Prometheus, however, is hardly superhuman enough. He talks too much of his chains and his uneasy posture. He is rather too much depressed and agitated. His resolution seems to depend on the knowledge which he possesses, that he holds the fate of his torturer in his hands, and that the hour of his release will surely come. But Satan is a creature of another sphere. The might of his intellectual nature is victorious over the extremity of pain. Amidst agonies which cannot be conceived without horror, he deliberates, resolves, and even exults. Against the sword of Michael, against the thunder of Jehovah, against the flaming lake and the marl burning with solid fire, against the prospect of an eternity of unintermittent misery, his spirit bears up unbroken, resting on its own innate energies, requiring no support from any thing external, nor even from hope itself!

To return for a moment to the parallel which we have been attempting to draw between Milton and Dante, we would add that the poetry of these great men has in a considerable degree taken its character from their moral qualities. They are not egotists. They rarely obtrude their idiosyncracies on their readers. They have nothing in common with those modern beggars for fame, who extort a pittance from the compassion of the inexperienced, by exposing the nakedness and sores of their minds. Yet it would be difficult to name two writers whose works have been more completely, though undesignedly, coloured by their personal feelings.

The character of Milton was peculiarly distinguished by

loftiness of thought; that of Dante by intensity of feeling. In every line of the Divine Comedy we discern the asperity which is produced by pride struggling with misery. There is perhaps no work in the world so deeply and uniformly sorrowful. The melancholy of Dante was no fantastic caprice. It was not, as far as at this distance of time can be judged, the effect of external circumstances. It was from within. Neither love nor glory, neither the conflicts of the earth nor the hope of heaven could dispel it. It twined every consolation and every pleasure into its own nature. It resembled that noxious Sardinian soil of which the intense bitterness is said to have been perceptible even in its honey. His mind was, in the noble language of the Hebrew poet, "a land of darkness, as darkness itself, and where the light was as darkness!" The gloom of his character discolours all the passions of men and all the face of nature, and tinges with its own livid hue the flowers of Paradise and the glories of the Eternal Throne! All the portraits of him are singularly characteristic. No person can look on the features, noble even to ruggedness, the dark furrows of the cheek, the haggard and woful stare of the eye, the sullen and contemptuous curve of the lip, and doubt that they belonged to a man too proud and too sensitive to be happy.

Milton was, like Dante, a statesman and a lover; and, like Dante, he had been unfortunate in ambition and in love. He had survived his health and his sight, the comforts of his home and the prosperity of his party. Of the great men by whom he had been distinguished at his entrance into life, some had been taken away from the evil to come; some had carried into foreign climates their unconquerable hatred of oppression; some were pining in dungeons; and some had poured forth their blood on scaffolds. That hateful proscription, facetiously termed the Act of Indemnity and Oblivion, had set a mark on the poor, blind, deserted poet, and held him up by name to the hatred of a profligate court and an inconstant people! Venal and licentious scribblers, with just sufficient talent to clothe the thoughts of a pander in the style of a bellman, were now the favourite writers of the sovereign and the public. It was a loathesome herd—which could be compared to

nothing so fitly as to the rabble of Comus, grotesque monsters, half bestial, half human, dropping with wine, bloated with gluttony, and reeling in obscene dances. Amidst these his muse was placed, like the chaste lady of the Masque, lofty, spotless, and serene—to be chatted at, and pointed at, and grinned at, by the whole rabble of Satyrs and Goblins. If ever despondency and asperity could be excused in any man, it might have been excused in Milton. But the strength of his mind overcame every calamity. Neither blindness, nor gout, nor age, nor penury, nor domestic afflictions, nor political disappointments, nor abuse, nor proscription, nor neglect, had power to disturb his sedate and majestic patience. His spirits do not seem to have been high, but they were singularly equable. His temper was serious, perhaps stern; but it was a temper which no sufferings could render sullen or fretful. Such as it was, when, on the eve of great events, he returned from his travels, in the prime of health and manly beauty, loaded with literary distinctions and glowing with patriotic hopes, such it continued to be—when, after having experienced every calamity which is incident to our nature, old, poor, sightless, and disgraced, he retired to his hovel to die!

Hence it was, that though he wrote the Paradise Lost at a time of life when images of beauty and tenderness are in general beginning to fade, even from those minds in which they have not been effaced by anxiety and disappointment, he adorned it with all that is most lovely and delightful in the physical and in the moral world. Neither Theocritus nor Ariosto had a finer or a more healthful sense of the pleasantness of external objects, or loved better to luxuriate amidst sunbeams and flowers, the songs of nightingales, the juice of summer fruits, and the coolness of shady fountains. His conception of love unites all the voluptuousness of the oriental harem, and all the gallantry of the chivalric tournament, with all the pure and quiet affection of an English fireside. His poetry reminds us of the miracles of Alpine scenery. Nooks and dells, beautiful as fairy-land, are embosomed in its most rugged and gigantic elevations. The roses and myrtles bloom unchilled on the verge of the avalanche.

Traces, indeed, of the peculiar character of Milton may

be found in all his works; but it is most strongly displayed in the Sonnets. Those remarkable poems have been undervalued by critics, who have not understood their nature. They have no epigrammatic point. There is none of the ingenuity of Filicaji in the thought, none of the hard and brilliant enamel of Petrarch in the style. They are simple but majestic records of the feelings of the poet; as little tricked out for the public eye as his diary would have been. A victory, an expected attack upon the city, a momentary fit of depression or exultation, a jest thrown out against one of his books, a dream, which for a short time restored to him that beautiful face over which the grave had closed for ever, led him to musings which, without effort, shaped themselves into verse. The unity of sentiment and severity of style, which characterize these little pieces, remind us of the Greek Anthology; or perhaps still more of the Collects of the English Liturgy—the noble poem on the massacres of Piedmont is strictly a collect in verse.

The Sonnets are more or less striking, according as the occasions which gave birth to them are more or less interesting. But they are, almost without exception, dignified by a sobriety and greatness of mind to which we know not where to look for a parallel. It would indeed be scarcely safe to draw any decided inferences as to the character of a writer, from passages directly egotistical. But the qualities which we have ascribed to Milton, though perhaps most strongly marked in those parts of his works which treat of his personal feelings, are distinguishable in every page, and impart to all his writings, prose and poetry, English, Latin, and Italian, a strong family likeness.

His public conduct was such as was to be expected from a man of a spirit so high, and an intellect so powerful. He lived at one of the most memorable eras in the history of mankind; at the very crisis of the great conflict between Oromasdes and Arimanes—liberty and despotism, reason and prejudice. That great battle was fought for no single generation, for no single land. The destinies of the human race were staked on the same cast with the freedom of the English people. Then were first proclaimed those mighty principles, which have since worked their way into the depths of the American forests, which have roused

Greece from the slavery and degradation of two thousand years, and which, from one end of Europe to the other, have kindled an unquenchable fire in the hearts of the oppressed, and loosed the knees of the oppressors with a strange and unwonted fear!

Of those principles, then struggling for their infant existence, Milton was the most devoted and eloquent literary champion. We need not say how much we admire his public conduct. But we cannot disguise from ourselves, that a large portion of his countrymen still think it unjustifiable. The civil war, indeed, has been more discussed, and is less understood, than any event in English history. The Roundheads laboured under the disadvantage of which the lion in the fable complained so bitterly. Though they were the conquerors, their enemies were the painters. As a body, they had done their utmost to decry and ruin literature; and literature was even with them, as, in the long run, it always is with its enemies. The best book, on their side of the question, is the charming memoir of Mrs. Hutchinson. May's History of the Parliament is good; but it breaks off at the most interesting crisis of the struggle. The performance of Ludlow is very foolish and violent; and most of the later writers who have espoused the same cause, Oldmixon, for instance, and Catherine Macaulay, have, to say the least, been more distinguished by zeal than either by candour or by skill. On the other side are the most authoritative and the most popular historical works in our language, that of Clarendon, and that of Hume. The former is not only ably written and full of valuable information, but has also an air of dignity and sincerity which makes even the prejudices and errors with which it abounds respectable. Hume, from whose fascinating narrative the great mass of the reading public are still contented to take their opinions, hated religion so much, that he hated liberty for having been allied with religion—and has pleaded the cause of tyranny with the dexterity of an advocate, while affecting the impartiality of a judge.

The public conduct of Milton must be approved or condemned, according as the resistance of the people to Charles I. shall appear to be justifiable or criminal. We shall therefore make no apology for dedicating a few pages to the dis-

cussion of that interesting and most important question. We shall not argue it on general grounds, we shall not recur to those primary principles from which the claim of any government to the obedience of its subjects is to be deduced; it is a vantage-ground to which we are entitled; but we will relinquish it. We are, on this point, so confident of superiority, that we have no objection to imitate the ostentatious generosity of those ancient knights, who vowed to joust without helmet or shield against all enemies, and to give their antagonist the advantage of sun and wind. We will take the naked, constitutional question. We confidently affirm, that every reason, which can be urged in favour of the Revolution of 1688, may be urged with at least equal force in favour of what is called the Great Rebellion.

In one respect only, we think, can the warmest admirers of Charles venture to say that he was a better sovereign than his son. He was not, in name and profession, a papist; we say in name and profession, because both Charles himself and his miserable creature, Laud, while they abjured the innocent badges of popery, retained all its worst vices, a complete subjection of reason to authority, a weak preference of form to substance, a childish passion for mummeries, an idolatrous veneration for the priestly character, and, above all, a stupid and ferocious intolerance. This, however, we waive. We will concede that Charles was a good protestant; but we say that his protestantism does not make the slightest distinction between his case and that of James. The principles of the Revolution have often been grossly misrepresented, and never more than in the course of the present year. There is a certain class of men, who, while they profess to hold in reverence the great names and great actions of former times, never look at them for any other purpose than in order to find in them some excuse for existing abuses. In every venerable precedent, they pass by what is essential, and take only what is accidental: they keep out of sight what is beneficial, and hold up to public imitation all that is defective. If, in any part of any great example, there be any thing unsound, these flesh-flies detect it with an unerring instinct, and dart upon it with a ravenous delight. They cannot always prevent the advocates of a good measure from compassing their end; but they feel, with their prototype, that

"Their labours must be to pervert that end,
And out of good still to find means of evil."

To the blessings which England has derived from the Revolution these people are utterly insensible. The expulsion of a tyrant, the solemn recognition of popular rights, liberty, security, toleration, all go for nothing with them. One sect there was, which, from unfortunate temporary causes, it was thought necessary to keep under close restraint. One part of the empire there was so unhappily circumstanced, that at that time its misery was necessary to our happiness, and its slavery to our freedom! These are the parts of the Revolution which the politicians of whom we speak love to contemplate, and which seem to them, not indeed to vindicate, but in some degree to palliate the good which it has produced. Talk to them of Naples, of Spain, or of South America. They stand forth, zealots for the doctrine of Divine Right, which has now come back to us, like a thief from transportation, under the *alias* of Legitimacy. But mention the miseries of Ireland! Then William is a hero. Then Somers and Shrewsbury are great men. Then the Revolution is a glorious era! The very same persons, who, in this country, never omit an opportunity of reviving every wretched Jacobite slander respecting the whigs of that period, have no sooner crossed St. George's channel, than they begin to fill their bumpers to the glorious and immortal memory. They may truly boast that they look not at men, but measures. So that evil be done, they care not who does it—the arbitrary Charles or the liberal William, Ferdinand the catholic or Frederick the protestant! On such occasions their deadliest opponents may reckon upon their candid construction. The bold assertions of these people have of late impressed a large portion of the public with an opinion that James II. was expelled simply because he was a catholic, and that the Revolution was essentially a protestant revolution.

But this certainly was *not* the case. Nor can any person, who has acquired more knowledge of the history of those times than is to be found in Goldsmith's Abridgment, believe that, if James had held his own religious opinions without wishing to make proselytes; or if, wishing even to

make proselytes, he had contented himself with exerting only his constitutional influence for that purpose, the Prince of Orange would ever have been invited over. Our ancestors, we suppose, knew their own meaning. And, if we may believe them, their hostility was *primarily* not to popery, but to *tyranny*. They did not drive out a tyrant because he was a catholic; but they excluded catholics from the crown, because they thought them likely to be tyrants. The ground on which they, in their famous resolution, declared the throne vacant, was this, "that James had broken the fundamental laws of the kingdom." Every man, therefore, who approves of the Revolution of 1688, must hold that the *breach of fundamental laws on the part of the sovereign* justifies resistance. The question then is this: Had Charles I. broken the fundamental laws of England?

No person can answer in the negative, unless he refuses credit, not merely to all the accusations brought against Charles by his opponents, but to the narratives of the warmest royalists, and to the confessions of the king himself. If there be *any* historian of *any* party who has related the events of that reign, the conduct of Charles, from his accession to the meeting of the Long Parliament, had been a continued course of oppression and treachery. Let those who applaud the Revolution and condemn the rebellion, mention one act of James II. to which a parallel is not to be found in the history of his father. Let them lay their fingers on a single article in the Declaration of Right, presented by the two Houses to William and Mary, which Charles is not acknowledged to have violated. He had, according to the testimony of his own friends, usurped the functions of the legislature, raised taxes without the consent of parliament, and quartered troops on the people in the most illegal and vexatious manner. Not a single session of parliament had passed without some unconstitutional attack on the freedom of debate. The right of petition was grossly violated. Arbitrary judgments, exorbitant fines, and unwarranted imprisonments, were grievances of daily and hourly occurrence. If these things do not justify resistance, the Revolution was treason; if they do, the Great Rebellion was laudable.

But, it is said, why not adopt milder measures? Why, after the king had consented to so many reforms, and renounced so many oppressive prerogatives, did the parliament continue to rise in their demands, at the risk of provoking a civil war? The ship-money had been given up. The star-chamber had been abolished. Provision had been made for the frequent convocation and secure deliberation of parliaments. Why not pursue an end confessedly good, by peaceable and regular means? We recur again to the analogy of the Revolution. Why was James driven from the throne? Why was he not retained upon conditions? He too had offered to call a free parliament, and to submit to its decision all the matters in dispute. Yet we praise our forefathers, who preferred a revolution, a disputed succession, a dynasty of strangers, twenty years of foreign and intestine war, a standing army, and a national debt, to the rule, however restricted, of a tried and proved tyrant. The Long Parliament acted on the same principle, and is entitled to the same praise. They could not trust the king. He had no doubt passed salutary laws. But what assurance had they that he would not break them? He had renounced oppressive prerogatives. But where was the security that he would not resume them? They had to deal with a man whom no tie could bind, a man who made and broke promises with equal facility, a man whose honour had been a hundred times pawned—and never redeemed.

Here, indeed, the Long Parliament stands on still stronger ground than the Convention of 1688. No action of James can be compared for wickedness and impudence to the conduct of Charles with respect to the Petition of Right. The lords and commons present him with a bill in which the constitutional limits of his power are marked out. He hesitates; he evades; at last he bargains to give his assent, for five subsidies. The bill receives his solemn assent. The subsidies are voted. But no sooner is the tyrant relieved, than he returns at once to all the arbitrary measures which he had bound himself to abandon, and violates all the clauses of the very act which he had been paid to pass.

For more than ten years, the people had seen the rights, which were theirs by a double claim, by immemorial inheritance and by recent purchase, infringed by the perfidious

king who had recognised them. At length circumstances compelled Charles to summon another parliament; another chance was given them for liberty. Were they to throw it away, as they had thrown away the former? Were they again to be cozened by *le Roi le veut?* Were they again to advance their money on pledges, which had been forfeited over and over again! Were they to lay a second Petition of Right at the foot of the throne, to grant another lavish aid in exchange for another unmeaning ceremony, and then take their departure, till, after ten years more of fraud and oppression, their prince should again require a supply, and again repay it with a perjury? They were compelled to choose whether they would *trust* a tyrant or *conquer* him. We think that they chose wisely and nobly.

The advocates of Charles, like the advocates of other malefactors against whom overwhelming evidence is produced, generally decline all controversy about the facts, and content themselves with calling testimony to character. He had so many private virtues! And had James II. no private virtues? Was even Oliver Cromwell, his bitterest enemies themselves being judges, destitute of private virtues? And what, after all, are the virtues ascribed to Charles? A religious zeal, not more sincere than that of his son, and fully as weak and narrow-minded, and a few of the ordinary household decencies, which half the tombstones in England claim for those who lie beneath them. A good father! A good husband! Ample apologies, indeed, for fifteen years of persecution, tyranny, and falsehood!

We charge him with having broken his coronation-oath—and we are told that he kept his marriage-vow! We accuse him of having given up his people to the merciless inflictions of the most hot-headed and hard-hearted of prelates—and the defence is, that he took his little son on his knee and kissed him! We censure him for having violated the articles of the Petition of Right, after having, for good and valuable consideration, promised to observe them—and we are informed that he was accustomed to hear prayers at six o'clock in the morning! It is to such considerations as these, together with his Vandyke dress, his handsome face, and his peaked beard, that he owes, we verily believe, most of his popularity with the present generation.

For ourselves, we own that we do not understand the common phrase—a good man, but a bad king. We can as easily conceive a good man and an unnatural father, or a good man and a treacherous friend. We cannot, in estimating the character of an individual, leave out of our consideration his conduct in the most important of all human relations. And if in that relation we find him to have been selfish, cruel, and deceitful, we shall take the liberty to call him a bad man, in spite of all his temperance at table, and all his regularity at chapel.

We cannot refrain from adding a few words respecting a topic on which the defenders of Charles are fond of dwelling. If, they say, he governed his people ill, he at least governed them after the example of his predecessors. If he violated their privileges, it was because those privileges had not been accurately defined. No act of oppression has ever been imputed to him which has not a parallel in the annals of the Tudors. This point Hume has laboured, with an art which is as discreditable in an historical work as it would be admirable in a forensic address. The answer is short, clear, and decisive. Charles had assented to the Petition of Right. *He had renounced* the oppressive powers said to have been exercised by his predecessors; and he had renounced them for money. He was not entitled to set up his antiquated claims against his own recent release.

These arguments are so obvious that it may seem superfluous to dwell upon them. But those who have observed how much the events of that time are misrepresented and misunderstood, will not blame us for stating the case simply. It is a case of which the simplest statement is the strongest.

The enemies of the parliament, indeed, rarely choose to take issue on the great points of the question. They content themselves with exposing some of the crimes and follies to which public commotions necessarily give birth. They bewail the unmerited fate of Strafford. They execrate the lawless violence of the army. They laugh at the scriptural names of the preachers. Major-generals fleecing their districts; soldiers revelling on the spoils of a ruined peasantry; upstarts, enriched by the public plunder, taking possession of the hospitable firesides and hereditary trees of the old gentry; boys smashing the beautiful windows of cathedrals;

Quakers riding naked through the market-place; Fifth-monarchy-men shouting for King Jesus; agitators lecturing from the top of tubs, on the fate of Agag;—all these, they tell us, were the offspring of the Great Rebellion.

Be it so. We are not careful to answer in this matter. These charges, were they infinitely more important, would not alter our opinion of an event, which alone has made us to differ from the slaves who crouch beneath the sceptres of Brandenburg and Braganza. Many evils, no doubt, *were* produced by the civil war. They were the price of our liberty. Has the acquisition been worth the sacrifice? It is the nature of the devil of tyranny to tear and rend the body which he leaves. Are the miseries of continued possession less horrible than the struggles of the tremendous exorcism?

If it were possible that a people, brought up under an intolerant and arbitrary system, could subvert that system without acts of cruelty and folly, half the objections to despotic power would be removed. We should, in that case, be compelled to acknowledge that it at least produces no pernicious effects on the intellectual and moral character of a people. We deplore the outrages which accompany revolutions. But the more violent the outrages, the more assured we feel that a *revolution was necessary*. The violence of those outrages will always be proportioned to the ferocity and ignorance of the people: and the ferocity and ignorance of the people will be proportioned to the oppression and degradation under which they have been accustomed to live. Thus it was in our civil war. The rulers in the church and state reaped only that which they had sown. They had prohibited free discussion—they had done their best to keep the people unacquainted with their duties and their rights. The retribution was just and natural. If they suffered from popular ignorance, it was because they had themselves taken away the key of knowledge. If they were assailed with blind fury, it was because they had exacted an equally blind submission.

It is the character of such revolutions that we always see the worst of them at first. Till men have been for some time free, they know not how to use their freedom. The natives of wine-countries are always sober. In climates

where wine is a rarity, intemperance abounds. A newly-liberated people may be compared to a northern army encamped on the Rhine or the Xeres. It is said that, when soldiers in such a situation first find themselves able to indulge without restraint in such a rare and expensive luxury, nothing is to be seen but intoxication. Soon, however, plenty teaches discretion; and after wine has been for a few months their daily fare, they become more temperate than they had ever been in their own country. In the same manner, the final and permanent fruits of liberty are wisdom, moderation, and mercy. Its immediate effects are often atrocious crimes, conflicting errors, skepticism on points the most clear, dogmatism on points the most mysterious. It is just at this crisis that its enemies love to exhibit it. They pull down the scaffolding from the half-finished edifice; they point to the flying dust, the falling bricks, the comfortless rooms, the frightful irregularity of the whole appearance; and then ask in scorn where the promised splendour and comfort are to be found? If such miserable sophisms were to prevail, there would never be a good house or a good government in the world.

Ariosto tells a pretty story of a fairy, who, by some mysterious law of her nature, was condemned to appear at certain seasons in the form of a foul and poisonous snake. Those who injured her during the period of her disguise, were forever excluded from participation in the blessings which she bestowed. But to those who, in spite of her loathsome aspect, pitied and protected her, she afterwards revealed herself in the beautiful and celestial form which was natural to her, accompanied their steps, granted all their wishes, filled their houses with wealth, made them happy in love, and victorious in war.* Such a spirit is Liberty. At times she takes the form of a hateful reptile. She grovels, she hisses, she stings. But wo to those who in disgust shall venture to crush her! And happy are those who, having dared to receive her in her degraded and frightful shape, shall at length be rewarded by her in the time of her beauty and her glory.

There is only one cure for the evils which newly acquired

* Orlando Furioso, canto 43.

freedom produces—and that cure is *freedom!* When a prisoner leaves his cell, he cannot bear the light of day—he is unable to discriminate colours or recognise faces. But the remedy is not to remand him into his dungeon, but to accustom him to the rays of the sun. The blaze of truth and liberty may at first dazzle and bewilder nations which have become half-blind in the house of bondage. But let them gaze on, and they will soon be able to bear it. In a few years men learn to reason. The extreme violence of opinion subsides. Hostile theories correct each other. The scattered elements of truth cease to conflict, and begin to coalesce. And at length a system of justice and order is educed out of the chaos.

Many politicians of our time are in the habit of laying it down as a self-evident proposition, that no people ought to be free till they are fit to use their freedom. The maxim is worthy of the fool in the old story, who resolved not to go into the water till he had learnt to swim? If men are to wait for liberty till they become wise and good in slavery, they may indeed wait forever.

Therefore it is that we decidedly approve of the conduct of Milton and the other wise and good men who, in spite of much that was ridiculous and hateful in the conduct of their associates, stood firmly by the cause of public liberty. We are not aware that the poet has been charged with personal participation in any of the blamable excesses of that time. The favourite topic of his enemies is the line of conduct which he pursued with regard to the execution of the king. Of that celebrated proceeding we by no means approve. Still we must say, in justice to the many eminent persons who concurred in it, and in justice more particularly to the eminent person who defended it, that nothing can be more absurd than the imputations which, for the last hundred and sixty years, it has been the fashion to cast upon the regicides. We have throughout abstained from appealing to first principles—we will not appeal to them now. We recur again to the parallel case of the Revolution. What essential distinction can be drawn between the execution of the father and the deposition of the son? What constitutional maxim is there, which applies to the former and not to the latter? The king can do no

wrong. If so, James was as innocent as Charles could have been. The minister only ought to be responsible for the acts of the sovereign. If so, why not impeach Jeffries, and retain James? The person of a king is sacred. Was the person of James considered sacred at the Boyne? To discharge cannon against an army in which a king is known to be posted, is to approach pretty near to regicide. Charles, too, it should always be remembered, was put to death by men who had been exasperated by the hostilities of several years, and who had never been bound to him by any other tie than that which was common to them with all their fellow-citizens. Those who drove James from his throne, who seduced his army, who alienated his friends, who first imprisoned him in his palace, and then turned him out of it, who broke in upon his very slumbers by imperious messages, who pursued him with fire and sword from one part of the empire to another, who hanged, drew, and quartered his adherents, and attainted his innocent heir, were his nephew and his two daughters! When we reflect on all these things, we are are at a loss to conceive how the same persons who, on the fifth of November, thank God for wonderfully conducting his servant King William, and for making all opposition fall before him until he became our king and governor, can, on the thirtieth of January, contrive to be afraid that the blood of the royal martyr may be visited on themselves and their children.

We do not, we repeat, approve of the execution of Charles; not because the constitution exempts the king from responsibility, for we know that all such maxims, however excellent, have their exceptions; nor because we feel any peculiar interest in his character, for we think that his sentence describes him with perfect justice as a "tyrant, a traitor, a murderer, and a public enemy;" but because we are convinced that the measure was most injurious to the cause of freedom. He whom it removed was a captive and a hostage. His heir, to whom the allegiance of every royalist was instantly transferred, was at large. The Presbyterians could never have been perfectly reconciled to the father. They had no such rooted enmity to the son. The great body of the people, also, contemplated that proceeding with feelings which, however unreasonable, no government could safely venture to outrage.

But, though we think the conduct of the regicides blamable, that of Milton appears to us in a very different light. The deed was done. It could not be undone. The evil was incurred; and the object was to render it as small as possible. We censure the chiefs of the army for not yielding to the popular opinion: but we cannot censure Milton for wishing to change that opinion. The very feeling, which would have restrained us from committing the act, would have led us, after it had been committed, to defend it against the ravings of servility and superstition. For the sake of public liberty, we wish that the thing had not been done while the people disapproved of it. But, for the sake of public liberty, we should also have wished the people to approve of it when it was done. If any thing more were wanting to the justification of Milton, the book of Salmasius would furnish it. That miserable performance is now with justice considered only as a beacon to word-catchers who wish to become statesmen. The celebrity of the man who refuted it, the "Æneæ magni dextra," gives it all its fame with the present generation. In that age the state of things was different. It was not then fully understood how vast an interval separates the mere classical scholar from the political philosopher. Nor can it be doubted, that a treatise which, bearing the name of so eminent a critic, attacked the fundamental principles of all free governments, must, if suffered to remain unanswered, have produced a most pernicious effect on the public mind.

We wish to add a few words relative to another subject on which the enemies of Milton delight to dwell—his conduct during the administration of the Protector. That an enthusiastic votary of liberty should accept office under a military usurper, seems, no doubt, at first sight, extraordinary. But all the circumstances in which the country was then placed were extraordinary. The ambition of Oliver was of no vulgar kind. He never seems to have coveted despotic power. He at first fought sincerely and manfully for the parliament, and never deserted it, till it had deserted its duty. If he dissolved it by force, it was not till he found that the few members, who remained after so many deaths, secessions, and expulsions, were desirous to appropriate to themselves a power, which they held only in trust, and to

inflict upon England the curse of a Venetian oligarchy. But even when thus placed by violence at the head of affairs, he did not assume unlimited power. He gave the country a constitution far more perfect than any which had at that time been known in the world. He reformed the representative system in a manner which has extorted praise even from Lord Clarendon. For himself, he demanded indeed the first place in the commonwealth; but with powers scarcely so great as those of a Dutch stadtholder, or an American president. He gave the parliament a voice in the appointment of ministers, and left to it the whole legislative authority—not even reserving to himself a veto on its enactments. And he did not require that the chief-magistracy should be hereditary in his family. Thus far, we think, if the circumstances of the time, and the opportunities which he had of aggrandizing himself, be fairly considered, he will not lose by comparison with Washington or Bolivar. Had his moderation been met by corresponding moderation, there is no reason to think that he would have overstepped the line which he had traced for himself. But when he found that his parliaments questioned the authority under which they met, and that he was in danger of being deprived of the restricted power which was absolutely necessary to his personal safety, then, it must be acknowledged, he adopted a more arbitrary policy.

Yet, though we believe that the intentions of Cromwell were at first honest, though we believe that he was driven from the noble course which he had marked out for himself by the almost irresistible force of circumstances, though we admire, in common with all men of all parties, the ability and energy of his splendid administration, we are not pleading for arbitrary and lawless power, even in his hands. We know that a good constitution is infinitely better than the best despot. But we suspect, that, at the time of which we speak, the violence of religious and political enmities rendered a stable and happy settlement next to impossible. The choice lay, not between Cromwell and liberty, but between Cromwell and the Stuarts. That Milton chose well, no man can doubt, who fairly compares the events of the protectorate with those of the thirty years which succeeded it—the darkest and most disgraceful in

the English annals. Cromwell was evidently laying, though in an irregular manner, the foundations of an admirable system. Never before had religious liberty and the freedom of discussion been enjoyed in a greater degree. Never had the national honour been better upheld abroad, or the seat of justice better filled at home. And it was rarely that any opposition, which stopped short of open rebellion, provoked the resentment of the liberal and magnanimous usurper. The institutions which he had established, as set down in the Instrument of Government, and the Humble Petition and Advice, were excellent. His practice, it is true, too often departed from the theory of these institutions. But, had he lived a few years longer, it is probable that his institutions would have survived him, and that his arbitrary practice would have died with him. His power had not been consecrated by any ancient prejudices. It was upheld only by his great personal qualities. Little, therefore, was to be dreaded from a second Protector, unless he were also a second Oliver Cromwell. The events which followed his decease are the most complete vindication of those who exerted themselves to uphold his authority. For his death dissolved the whole frame of society. The army rose against the parliament, the different corps of the army against each other. Sect raved against sect. Party plotted against party. The Presbyterians, in their eagerness to be revenged on the Independents, sacrificed their own liberty, and deserted all their old principles. Without casting one glance on the past, or requiring one stipulation for the future, they threw down their freedom at the feet of the most frivolous and heartless of tyrants.

Then came those days never to be recalled without a blush—the days of servitude without loyalty, and sensuality without love, of dwarfish talents and gigantic vices, the paradise of cold hearts and narrow minds, the golden age of the coward, the bigot, and the slave. The king cringed to his rival that he might trample on his people, sunk into a viceroy of France, and pocketed, with complacent infamy, her degrading insults and her more degrading gold. The caresses of harlots and the jests of buffoons regulated the measures of a government, which had just ability enough to deceive, and just religion enough to persecute. The

principles of liberty were the scoff of every grinning courtier, and the anathema maranatha of every fawning dean. In every high place, worship was paid to Charles and James—Belial and Moloch; and England propitiated those obscene and cruel idols with the blood of her best and bravest children. Crime succeeded to crime, and disgrace to disgrace, till the race, accursed of God and man, was a second time driven forth, to wander on the face of the earth, and to be a by-word and a shaking of the head to the nations.

Most of the remarks which we have hitherto made on the public character of Milton, apply to him only as one of a large body. We shall proceed to notice some of the peculiarities which distinguished him from his contemporaries. And, for that purpose, it is necessary to take a short survey of the parties into which the political world was at that time divided. We must premise, that our observations are intended to apply only to those who adhered, from a sincere preference, to one or to the other side. At a period of public commotion, every faction, like an Oriental army, is attended by a crowd of camp followers, a useless and heartless rabble, who prowl round its line of march in the hope of picking up something under its protection, but desert it in the day of battle, and often join to exterminate it after a defeat. England, at the time of which we are treating, abounded with such fickle and selfish politicians, who transferred their support to every government as it rose,—who kissed the hand of the king in 1640, and spit in his face in 1649,—who shouted with equal glee when Cromwell was inaugurated in Westminster Hall, and when he was dug up to be hanged at Tyburn,—who dined on calves' heads or on broiled rumps, and cut down oak-branches or stuck them up as circumstances altered, without the slighest shame or repugnance. These we leave out of the account. We take our estimate of parties from those who really deserved to be called partisans.

We would speak first of the Puritans, the most remarkable body of men, perhaps, which the world has ever produced. The odious and ridiculous parts of their character lie on the surface. He that runs may read them; nor have there been wanting attentive and malicious observers to point

them out. For many years after the Restoration, they were the theme of unmeasured invective and derision. They were exposed to the utmost licentiousness of the press and of the stage, at the time when the press and the stage were most licentious. They were not men of letters; they were, as a body, unpopular; they could not defend themselves; and the public would not take them under its protection. They were therefore abandoned, without reserve, to the tender mercies of the satirists and dramatists. The ostentatious simplicity of their dress, their sour aspect, their nasal twang, their stiff posture, their long graces, their Hebrew names, the Scriptural phrases which they introduced on every occasion, their contempt of human learning, their detestation of polite amusements, were indeed fair game for the laughers. But it is not from the laughers alone that the philosophy of history is to be learnt. And he who approaches this subject should carefully guard against the influence of that potent ridicule, which has already misled so many excellent writers.

"Ecco il fonte del riso, ed ecco il rio
Che mortali perigli in se contiene:
Hor qui tener a fren nostro a desio,
Ed esser cauti molto a noi conviene."*

Those who roused the people to resistance—who directed their measures through a long series of eventful years—who formed, out of the most unpromising materials, the finest army that Europe had ever seen—who trampled down king, church, and aristocracy—who, in the short intervals of domestic sedition and rebellion, made the name of England terrible to every nation on the face of the earth, were no vulgar fanatics. Most of their absurdities were mere external badges, like the signs of freemasonry or the dresses of friars. We regret that these badges were not more attractive. We regret that a body, to whose courage and talents mankind has owed inestimable obligations, had not the lofty elegance which distinguished some of the adherents of Charles I., or the easy good breeding for which the court of Charles II. was cele-

* Gerusalemme Liberata, xv. 57.

brated. But, if we must make our choice, we shall, like Bassanio in the play, turn from the specious caskets, which contain only the death's head and the fool's head, and fix our choice on the plain leaden chest which conceals the treasure.

The Puritans were men whose minds had derived a peculiar character from the daily contemplation of superior beings and external interests. Not content with acknowledging, in general terms, an overruling Providence, they habitually ascribed every event to the will of the Great Being, for whose power nothing was too vast, for whose inspection nothing was too minute. To know him, to serve him, to enjoy him, was with them the great end of existence. They rejected with contempt the ceremonious homage which other sects substituted for the pure worship of the soul. Instead of catching occasional glimpses of the Deity through an obscuring veil, they aspired to gaze full on the intolerable brightness, and to commune with him face to face. Hence originated their contempt for terrestrial distinctions. The difference between the greatest and meanest of mankind seemed to vanish, when compared with the boundless interval which separated the whole race from him on whom their own eyes were constantly fixed. They recognised no title to superiority but his favour; and, confident of that favour, they despised all the accomplishments and all the dignities of the world. If they were unacquainted with the works of philosophers and poets, they were deeply read in the oracles of God. If their names were not found in the registers of heralds, they felt assured that they were recorded in the Book of Life. If their steps were not accompanied by a splendid train of menials, legions of ministering angels had charge over them. Their palaces were houses not made with hands: their diadems crowns of glory which should never fade away! On the rich and the eloquent, on nobles and priests, they looked down with contempt: for they esteemed themselves rich in a more precious treasure, and eloquent in a more sublime language—nobles by the right of an earlier creation, and priests by the imposition of a mightier hand. The very meanest of them was a being to whose fate a mysterious and terrible importance belonged—on whose

slightest actions the spirits of light and darkness looked with anxious interest—who had been destined, before heaven and earth were created to enjoy a felicity which should continue when heaven and earth should have passed away. Events which short-sighted politicians ascribed to earthly causes had been ordained on his account. For his sake empires had risen, and flourished, and decayed. For his sake the Almighty had proclaimed his will by the pen of the evangelist, and the harp of the prophet. He had been rescued by no common deliverer from the grasp of no common foe. He had been ransomed by the sweat of no vulgar agony, by the blood of no earthly sacrifice. It was for him that the sun had been darkened, that the rocks had been rent, that the dead had arisen, that all nature had shuddered at the sufferings of her expiring God!

Thus the Puritan was made up of two different men, the one all self-abasement, penitence, gratitude, passion; the other proud, calm, inflexible, sagacious. He prostrated himself in the dust before his Maker; but he set his foot on the neck of his king. In his devotional retirement, he prayed with convulsions, and groans, and tears. He was half maddened by glorious or terrible illusions. He heard the lyres of angels, or the tempting whispers of fiends. He caught a gleam of the Beatific Vision, or woke screaming from the dreams of everlasting fire. Like Vane, he thought himself intrusted with the sceptre of the millennial year. Like Fleetwood, he cried in the bitterness of his soul that God had hid his face from him. But when he took his seat in the council or girt on his sword for war, these tempestuous workings of the soul had left no perceptible trace behind them. People, who saw nothing of the godly but their uncouth visages, and heard nothing from them but their groans and their whining hymns, might laugh at them. But those had little reason to laugh who encountered them in the hall of debate, or in the field of battle. These fanatics brought to civil and military affairs a coolness of judgment and an immutability of purpose which some writers have thought inconsistent with their religious zeal, but which were in fact the necessary effects of it. The intensity of their feelings on one subject made them tranquil on every other. One overpowering sentiment had subjected to itself

pity and hatred, ambition and fear. Death had lost its terrors and pleasure its charms. They had their smiles and their tears, their raptures and their sorrows, but not for the things of this world. Enthusiasm had made them Stoics, had cleared their minds from every vulgar passion and prejudice, and raised them above the influence of danger and of corruption. It sometimes might lead them to pursue unwise ends, but never to choose unwise means. They went through the world like Sir Artegale's iron man Talus with his flail, crushing and trampling down oppressors, mingling with human beings, but having neither part nor lot in human infirmities; insensible to fatigue, to pleasure, and to pain; not to be pierced by any weapon, not to be withstood by any barrier.

Such we believe to have been the character of the Puritans. We perceive the absurdity of their manners. We dislike the sullen gloom of their domestic habits. We acknowledge that the tone of their minds was often injured by straining after things to high for mortal reach. And we know that, in spite of their hatred of Popery, they too often fell into the worst vices of that bad system, intolerance and extravagant austerity—that they had their anchorites and their crusades, their Dunstans and their De Montforts, their Dominics and their Escobars. Yet when all circumstances are taken into consideration, we do not hesitate to pronounce them a brave, a wise, an honest, and a useful body.

The Puritans espoused the cause of civil liberty mainly because it was the cause of religion. There was another party, by no means numerous, but distinguished by learning and ability, which co-operated with them on very different principles. We speak of those whom Cromwell was accustomed to call the Heathens, men who were, in the phraseology of that time, doubting Thomases or careless Gallios with regard to religious subjects, but passionate worshippers of freedom. Heated by the study of ancient literature, they set up their country as their idol, and proposed to themselves the heroes of Plutarch as their examples. They seem to have borne some resemblance to the Brissotines of the French Revolution. But it is not very easy to draw the line of distinction between them and their devout associates, whose tone and manner they sometimes

found it convenient to affect, and sometimes, it is probable, imperceptibly adopted.

We now come to the Royalists. We shall attempt to speak of them as we have spoken of their antagonists, with perfect candour. We shall not charge upon a whole party the profligacy and baseness of the horseboys, gamblers, and bravoes, whom the hope of license and plunder attracted from all the dens of Whitefriars to the standard of Charles, and who disgraced their associates by excesses which, under the stricter discipline of the Parliamentary armies, were never tolerated. We will select a more favourable specimen. Thinking, as we do, that the cause of the king was the cause of bigotry and tyranny, we yet cannot refrain from looking with complacency on the character of the honest old Cavaliers. We feel a national pride in comparing them with the instruments which the despots of other countries are compelled to employ, with the mutes who throng their antechambers, and the Janissaries who mount guard at their gates. Our royalist countrymen were not heartless, dangling courtiers, bowing at every step, and simpering at every word. They were not mere machines for destruction, dressed up in uniforms, caned into skill, intoxicated into valour, defending without love, destroying without hatred. There was a freedom in their subserviency, a nobleness in their very degradation. The sentiment of individual independence was strong within them. They were indeed misled, but by no base or selfish motive. Compassion and romantic honour, the prejudices of childhood, and the venerable names of history, threw over them a spell potent as that of Duessa; and like the Red Cross Knight, they thought that they were doing battle for an injured beauty, while they defended a false and loathsome sorceress. In truth, they scarcely entered at all into the merits of the political question. It was not for a treacherous king or an intolerant church that they fought; but for the old banner which had waved in so many battles over the heads of their fathers, and for the altars at which they had received the hands of their brides. Though nothing could be more erroneous than their political opinions, they possessed in a far greater degree than their adversaries, those qualities which are the grace of private life. With many of the vices of the Round

Table, they had also many of its virtues, courtesy, generosity, veracity, tenderness, and respect for women. They had far more both of profound and of polite learning than the Puritans. Their manners were more engaging, their tempers more amiable, their tastes more elegant, and their households more cheerful.

Milton did not strictly belong to any of the classes which we have described. He was not a Puritan. He was not a freethinker. He was not a Cavalier. In his character the noblest qualities of every party were combined in harmonious union. From the parliament and from the court, from the conventicle and from the Gothic cloister, from the gloomy and sepulchral circles of the Roundheads, and from the Christmas revel of the hospitable Cavalier, his nature selected and drew to itself whatever was great and good, while it rejected all the base and pernicious ingredients by which those fine elements were defiled. Like the Puritans, he lived

"As ever in his great Taskmaster's eye."

Like them, he kept his mind continually fixed on an Almighty Judge and an eternal reward. And hence he acquired their contempt of external circumstances, their fortitude, their tranquillity, their inflexible resolution. But not the coolest sceptic or the most profane scoffer was more perfectly free from the contagion of their frantic delusions, their savage manners, their ludicrous jargon, their scorn of science, and their aversion to pleasure. Hating tyranny with a perfect hatred, he had nevertheless all the estimable and ornamental qualities which were almost entirely monopolized by the party of the tyrant. There was none who had a stronger sense of the value of literature, a finer relish for every elegant amusement, or a more chivalrous delicacy of honour and love. Though his opinions were democratic, his tastes and his associates were such as harmonize best with monarchy and aristocracy. He was under the influence of all the feelings by which the gallant Cavaliers were misled. But of those feelings he was the master, and not the slave. Like the hero of Homer, he enjoyed all the pleasures of fascination; but he was not fascinated. He listened

to the song of the Syrens; yet he glided by without being seduced to their fatal shore. He tasted the cup of Circe; but he bore about him a sure antidote against the effects of its bewitching sweetness. The illusions which captivated his imagination never impaired his reasoning powers. The statesman was a proof against the splendour, the solemnity, and the romance which enchanted the poet. Any person who will contrast the sentiments expressed in his Treatises on Prelacy, with the exquisite lines on ecclesiastical architecture and music in the Penseroso, which were published about the same time, will understand our meaning. This is an inconsistency which, more than any thing else, raises his character in our estimation; because it shows how many private tastes and feelings he sacrificed in order to do what he considered his duty to mankind. It is the very struggle of the noble Othello. His heart relents; but his hand is firm. He does naught in hate, but all in honour. He kisses the beautiful deceiver before he destroys her.

That from which the public character of Milton derives its great and peculiar splendour still remains to be mentioned. If he exerted himself to overthrow a forsworn king and a persecuting hierarchy, he exerted himself in conjunction with others. But the glory of the battle, which he fought for that species of freedom which is the most valuable, and which was then the least understood, the freedom of the human mind, is all his own. Thousands and ten of thousands among his contemporaries raised their voices against ship-money and the star-chamber. But there were few indeed who discerned the more fearful evils of moral and intellectual slavery, and the benefits which would result from the liberty of the press and the unfettered exercise of private judgment. These were the objects which Milton justly conceived to be the most important. He was desirous that the people should think for themselves as well as tax themselves, and be emancipated from the dominion of prejudice as well as from that of Charles. He knew that those who, with the best intentions, overlooked these schemes of reform, and contented themselves with pulling down the king and imprisoning the malignants, acted like the heedless brothers in his own poem, who, in their eagerness to disperse the train of the sorcerer, neglected the means of liberating the captive. They thought

only of conquering when they should have thought of disenchanting.

"Oh, ye mistook! You should have snatched the wand!
Without the rod reversed,
And backward mutters of dissevering power,
We cannot free the lady that sits here
Bound in strong fetters fixed and motionless."

To reverse the rod, to spell the charm backward, to break the ties which bound a stupefied people to the seat of enchantment, was the noble aim of Milton. To this all his public conduct was directed. For this he joined the Presbyterians—for this he forsook them. He fought their perilous battles; but he turned away with disdain from their insolent triumph. He saw that they, like those whom they had vanquished, were hostile to the liberty of thought. He therefore joined the Independents, and called upon Cromwell to break the secular chain, and to save free conscience from the paw of the Presbyterian wolf.* With a view to the same great object, he attacked the licensing system in that sublime treatise which every statesman should wear as a sign upon his hand, and as frontlets between his eyes. His attacks were, in general, directed less against particular abuses than against those deeply-seated errors on which almost all abuses are founded, the servile worship of eminent men and the irrational dread of innovation.

That he might shake the foundations of these debasing sentiments more effectually, he always selected for himself the boldest literary services. He never came up to the rear, when the outworks had been carried and the breach entered. He pressed into the forlorn hope. At the begining of the changes, he wrote with incomparable energy and eloquence against the bishops. But, when his opinions seemed likely to prevail, he passed on to other subjects, and abandoned prelacy to the crowd of writers who now hastened to insult a falling party. There is no more hazardous enterprise than that of bearing the torch of truth into those dark and infected recesses in which no light has ever shone. But it was the choice and the pleasure of Milton to penetrate the noisome vapours, and to brave the terrible explosion. Those who

* Sonnet to Cromwell.

most disapprove of his opinions must respect the hardihood with which he maintained them. He, in general, left to others the credit of expounding and defending the popular parts of his religious and political creed. He took his own stand upon those which the great body of his countrymen reprobated as criminal, or derided as paradoxical. He stood up for divorce and regicide. He ridiculed the Eikon. He attacked the prevailing systems of education. His radiant and beneficent career resembled that of the god of light and fertility,

> "Nitor in adversum; nec me, qui cætera, vincit
> Impetus, et rapido contrarius evehor orbi."

It is to be regretted that the prose writings of Milton should, in our time, be so little read. As compositions, they deserve the attention of every man who wishes to become acquainted with the full power of the English language. They abound with passages, compared with which the finest declamations of Burke sink into insignificance. They are a perfect field of cloth of gold. The style is stiff, with gorgeous embroidery. Not even in the earlier books of the Paradise Lost has he ever risen higher than in those parts of his controversial works, in which his feelings, excited by conflict, find a vent in bursts of devotional and lyric rapture. It is, to borrow his own majestic language, "a sevenfold chorus of hallelujahs and harping symphonies."*

We had intended to look more closely at their performances, to analyze the peculiarities of their diction, to dwell at some length on the sublime wisdom of the Areopagitica, and the nervous rhetoric of the Iconoclast, and to point out some of those magnificent passages which occur in the Treatise of Reformation and the Animadversions on the Remonstrant. But the length to which our remarks have already extended renders this impossible.

We must conclude. And yet we can scarcely tear ourselves away from the subject. The days immediately following the publication of this relic of Milton appear to be

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*The Reason of Church Government urged against prelacy, Book II.

peculiarly set apart and consecrated to his memory. And we shall scarcely be censured if, on this his festival, we be found lingering near his shrine, how worthless soever may be the offering which we bring to it. While this book lies on our table, we seem to be contemporaries of the great poet. We are transported a hundred and fifty years back. We can almost fancy that we are visiting him in his small lodging; that we see him sitting at the old organ beneath the faded green hangings; that we can catch the quick twinkle of his eyes, rolling in vain to find the day; that we are reading in the lines of his noble countenance the proud and mournful history of his glory and his affliction! We image to ourselves the breathless silence in which we should listen to his slightest word; the passionate veneration with which we should kneel to kiss his hand and weep upon it; the earnestness with which we should endeavour to console him, if indeed such a spirit could need consolation, for the neglect of an age unworthy of his talents and his virtues; the eagerness with which we should contest with his daughters, or with his Quaker friend, Elwood, the privilege of reading Homer to him, or of taking down the immortal accents which flowed from his lips.

These are perhaps foolish feelings. Yet we cannot be ashamed of them; nor shall we be sorry if what we have written shall in any degree excite them in other minds. We are not much in the habit of idolizing either the living or the dead. And we think that there is no more certain indication of a weak and ill-regulated intellect, than that propensity which, for want of a better name, we will venture to christen *Boswellism*. But *there are* a few characters which have stood the closest scrutiny and the severest tests, which have been tried in the furnace and have proved pure, which have been weighed in the balance and have not been found wanting, which have been declared sterling by the general consent of mankind, and which are visibly stamped with the image and superscription of the Most High. These great men we trust that we know how to prize; and of these was Milton. The sight of his books, the sound of his name, are refreshing to us. His thoughts resemble those celestial fruits and flowers which the Virgin Martyr of Massinger sent down from the gardens of Paradise to the earth, dis-

tinguished from the productions of other soils, not only by their superior bloom and sweetness, but by their miraculous efficacy to invigorate and to heal. They are powerful, not only to delight, but to elevate and purify. Nor do we envy the man who can study either the life or the writings of the great Poet and Patriot, without aspiring to emulate, not indeed the sublime works with which his genius has enriched our literature, but the zeal with which he laboured for the public good, the fortitude with which he endured every private calamity, the lofty disdain with which he looked down on temptation and dangers, the deadly hatred which he bore to bigots and tyrants, and the faith which he so sternly kept with his country and with his fame.

Machiavelli.*

[*Edinburgh Review.*]

THOSE who have attended to the practice of our literary tribunal are well aware that, by means of certain legal fictions similar to those of Westminster Hall, we are frequently enabled to take cognisance of cases lying beyond the sphere of our original jurisdiction. We need hardly say, therefore, that, in the present instance, M. Périer is merely a Richard Roe—that his name is used for the sole purpose of bringing Machiavelli into court—and that he will not be mentioned in any subsequent stage of the proceedings.

We doubt whether any name in literary history be so generally odious as that of the man whose character and writings we now propose to consider. The terms in which he is commonly described would seem to import that he was the Tempter, the Evil Principle, the discoverer of ambition and revenge, the original inventor of perjury; that, before the publication of his fatal *Prince*, there had never been a hypocrite, a tyrant, or a traitor, a simulated virtue or a convenient crime. One writer gravely assures us, that Maurice of Saxony learned all his fraudulent policy from that execrable volume. Another remarks that since it was translated into Turkish, the Sultans have been more addicted than formerly to the custom of strangling their brothers. Our own foolish Lord Lyttleton charges the poor Florentine with the manifold treasons of the House of Guise, and the massacre of St. Bartholomew. Several authors have hinted that the Gunpowder Plot is to be primarily attributed to his doctrines, and seem to think that his effigy ought to be substituted for that of Guy Fawkes, in

* *Œuvres complètes de Machiavel, traduites par* J. V. PÉRIER. Paris, 1825.

those processions by which the ingenuous youth of England annually commemorate the preservation of the Three Estates. The Church of Rome has pronounced his works accursed things. Nor have our own countrymen been backward in testifying their opinion of his merits. Out of his surname they have coined an epithet for a knave—and out of his Christian name a synonyme for the Devil.*

It is indeed scarcely possible for any person, not well acquainted with the history and literature of Italy, to read without horror and amazement, the celebrated treatise which has brought so much obloquy on the name of Machiavelli. Such a display of wickedness, naked, yet not ashamed, such cool, judicious, scientific atrocity, seem rather to belong to a fiend than to the most depraved of men. Principles which the most hardened ruffian would scarcely hint to his most trusted accomplice, or avow, without the disguise of some palliating sophism, even to his own mind, are professed without the slightest circumlocution, and assumed as the fundamental axioms of all political science.

It is not strange that ordinary readers should regard the author of such a book as the most depraved and shameless of human beings. Wise men, however, have always been inclined to look with great suspicion on the angels and demons of the multitude; and in the present instance, several circumstances have led even superficial observers to question the justice of the vulgar decision. It is notorious that Machiavelli was, through life, a zealous republican. In the same year in which he composed his manual of Kingcraft, he suffered imprisonment and torture in the cause of public liberty. It seems inconceivable that the martyr of freedom should have designedly acted as the apostle of tyranny. Several eminent writers have, therefore, endeavoured to detect, in this unfortunate performance, some concealed meaning more consistent with the character and conduct of the author than that which appears at the first glance.

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* Nick Machiavel had ne'er a trick,
Tho' he gave his name to our old Nick.
Hudibras, Part III. Canto I.

But, we believe, there is a schism on this subject among the Antiquaries.

One hypothesis is, that Machiavelli intended to practise on the young Lorenzo de Medici a fraud, similar to that which Sunderland is said to have employed against our James the Second,—that he urged his pupil to violent and perfidious measures, as the surest means of accelerating the moment of deliverance and revenge. Another supposition, which Lord Bacon seems to countenance, is that the treatise was merely a piece of grave irony, intended to warn nations against the arts of ambitious men. It would be easy to show that neither of these solutions is consistent with many passages in the *Prince* itself. But the most decisive refutation is that which is furnished by the other works of Machiavelli In all the writings which he gave to the public, and in all those which the research of editors has, in the course of three centuries, discovered—in his Comedies, designed for the entertainment of the multitude —in his Comments on Livy, intended for the perusal of the most enthusiastic patriots of Florence—in his History, inscribed to one of the most amiable and estimable of the Popes—in his Public Despatches—in his private Memoranda, the same obliquity of moral principle for which the *Prince* is so severely censured is more or less discernible. We doubt whether it would be possible to find, in all the many volumes of his compositions, a single expression indicating that dissimulation and treachery had ever struck him as discreditable.

After this it may seem ridiculous to say, that we are acquainted with few writings which exhibit so much elevation of sentiment, so pure and warm a zeal for the public good, or so just a view of the duties and rights of citizens, as those of Machiavelli. Yet so it is. And even from the *Prince* itself we could select many passages in support of this remark. To a reader of our age and country, this inconsistency is, at first, perfectly bewildering. The whole man seems to be an enigma—a grotesque assemblage of incongruous qualities—selfishness and generosity, cruelty and benevolence, craft and simplicity, abject villany and romantic heroism. One sentence is such as a veteran diplomatist would scarcely write in cipher for the direction of his most confidential spy: the next seems to be extracted from a theme composed by an ardent schoolboy on the death of

Leonidas. An act of dexterous perfidy, and an act of patriotic self-devotion, call forth the same kind and the same degree of respectful admiration. The moral sensibility of the writer seems at once to be morbidly obtuse and morbidly acute. Two characters altogether dissimilar are united in him. They are not merely joined, but interwoven. They are the warp and the woof of his mind; and their combination, like that of the variegated threads in shot silk, gives to the whole texture a glancing and ever-changing appearance. The explanation might have been easy, if he had been a very weak or a very affected man. But he was evidently neither the one nor the other. His works prove beyond all contradiction, that his understanding was strong, his taste pure, and his sense of the ridiculous exquisitely keen.

This is strange—and yet the strangest is behind. There is no reason whatever to think, that those amongst whom he lived saw any thing shocking or incongruous in his writings. Abundant proofs remain of the high estimation in which both his works and his person were held by the most respectable among his contemporaries. Clement the Seventh patronised the publication of those very books which the Council of Trent, in the following generation, pronounced unfit for the perusal of Christians. Some members of the democratical party censured the secretary for dedicating the *Prince* to a patron who bore the unpoplar name of Medici. But to those immoral doctrines, which have since called forth such severe reprehensions, no exception appears to have been taken. The cry against them was first raised beyond the Alps—and seems to have been heard with amazement in Italy. The earliest assailant, as far as we are aware, was a countryman of our own, Cardinal Pole. The author of the Anti-Machiavelli was a French Protestant.

It is, therefore, in the state of moral feeling among the Italians of those times, that we must seek for the real explanation of what seems most mysterious in the life and writings of this remarkable man. As this is a subject which suggests many interesting considerations, both political and metaphysical, we shall make no apology for discussing it at some length.

During the gloomy and disastrous centuries which followed the downfall of the Roman Empire, Italy had pre-

served, in a far greater degree than any other part of Western Europe, the traces of ancient civilization. The night which descended upon her was the night of an arctic summer:—the dawn began to reappear before the last reflection of the preceding sunset had faded from the horizon. It was in the time of the French Merovingians, and of the Saxon Heptarchy, that ignorance and ferocity seemed to have done their worst. Yet even then the Neapolitan provinces, recognising the authority of the Eastern Empire, preserved something of Eastern knowledge and refinement. Rome, protected by the sacred character of its pontiffs, enjoyed at least comparative security and repose. Even in those regions where the sanguinary Lombards had fixed their monarchy, there was incomparably more of wealth, of information, of physical comfort, and of social order, than could be found in Gaul, Britain, or Germany.

That which most distinguished Italy from the neighbouring countries was the importance which the population of the towns, from a very early period, began to acquire. Some cities, founded in wild and remote situations, by fugitives who had escaped from the rage of the barbarians, preserved their freedom by their obscurity, till they became able to preserve it by their power. Others seemed to have retained, under all the changing dynasties of invaders, under Odoacer and Theodoric, Narses and Alboin, the municipal institutions which had been conferred on them by the liberal policy of the Great Republic. In provinces which the central government was too feeble either to protect or to oppress, these institutions first acquired stability and vigour. The citizens, defended by their walls and governed by their own magistrates and their own by-laws, enjoyed a considerable share of republican independence. Thus a strong democratic spirit was called into action. The Carlovingian sovereigns were too imbecile to subdue it. The generous policy of Otho encouraged it. It might perhaps have been suppressed by a close coalition between the Church and the Empire. It was fostered and invigorated by their disputes. In the twelfth century it attained its full vigour, and, after a long and doubtful conflict, it triumphed over the abilities and courage of the Swabian Princes.

The assistance of the ecclesiastical power had greatly contributed to the success of the Guelfs. That success

would, however, have been a doubtful good, if its only effect had been to substitute a moral for a political servitude, to exalt the Popes at the expense of the Cæsars. Happily the public mind of Italy had long contained the seeds of free opinions, which were now rapidly developed by the genial influence of free institutions. The people of that country had observed the whole machinery of the church, its saints and its miracles, its lofty pretensions and its splendid ceremonial, its worthless blessings and its harmless curses, too long and too closely to be duped. They stood behind the scenes on which others were gazing with childish awe and interest. They witnessed the arrangement of the pulleys, and the manufacture of the thunders. They saw the natural faces and heard the natural voices of the actors. Distant nations looked on the Pope as the vicegerent of the Almighty, the oracle of the All-wise, the umpire from whose decisions, in the disputes either of theologians or of kings, no Christian ought to appeal. The Italians were acquainted with all the follies of his youth, and with all the dishonest arts by which he had attained power. They knew how often he had employed the keys of the church to release himself from the most sacred engagements, and its wealth to pamper his mistresses and nephews. The doctrines and rights of the established religion they treated with decent reverence. But though they still called themselves Catholics, they had ceased to be Papists. Those spiritual arms, which carried terror into the palaces and camps of the proudest sovereigns, excited only their contempt. When Alexander commanded our Henry the Second to submit to the lash before the tomb of a rebellious subject, he was himself an exile. The Romans, apprehending that he entertained designs against their liberties, had driven him from their city; and, though he solemnly promised to confine himself for the future to his spiritual functions, they still refused to re-admit him.

In every other part of Europe, a large and powerful privileged class trampled on the people and defied the government. But in the most flourishing parts of Italy the feudal nobles were reduced to comparative insignificance. In some districts they took shelter under the protection of the

powerful commonwealths which they were unable to oppose, and gradually sunk into the mass of burghers. In others they possessed great influence; but it was an influence widely different from that which was exercised by the chieftains of the Transalpine kingdoms. They were not petty princes, but eminent citizens. Instead of strengthening their fastnesses among the mountains, they embellished their places in the market-place. The state of society in the Neapolitan dominions, and in some parts of the Ecclesiastical State, more nearly resembled that which existed in the great monarchies of Europe. But the governments of Lombardy and Tuscany, through all their revolutions, preserved a different character. A people, when assembled in a town, is far more formidable to its rulers than when dispersed over a wide extent of country. The most arbitrary of the Cæsars found it necessary to feed and divert the inhabitants of their unwieldy capital at the expense of the provinces. The citizens of Madrid have more than once besieged their sovereign in his own palace, and extorted from him the most humiliating concessions. The sultans have often been compelled to propitiate the furious rabble of Constantinople with the head of an unpopular vizier. From the same cause there was a certain tinge of democracy in the monarchies and aristocracies of Northern Italy.

Thus liberty, partially, indeed, and transiently, revisited Italy; and with liberty came commerce and empire, science and taste, all the comforts and all the ornaments of life. The crusades, from which the inhabitants of other countries gained nothing but relics and wounds, brought the rising commonwealths of the Adriatic and Tyrrhene seas a large increase of wealth, dominion, and knowledge. Their moral and their geographical position enabled them to profit alike by the barbarism of the West and the civilization of the East. Their ships covered every sea. Their factories rose on every shore. Their money-changers set their tables in every city. Manufactures flourished. Banks were established. The operations of the commercial machine were facilitated by many useful and beautiful inventions. We doubt whether any country of Europe, our own perhaps excepted, have at the present time reached so high a point of wealth and civilization as some parts of Italy had attained

four hundred years ago. Historians rarely descend to those details from which alone the real state of the community can be collected. Hence, posterity is too often deceived by the vague hyperboles of poets and rhetoricians, who mistake the splendour of a court for the happiness of a people. Fortunately, John Villani has given us an ample and precise account of the state of Florence in the earlier part of the fourteenth century. The revenue of the republic amounted to three hundred thousand florins, a sum which, allowing for the depreciation of the precious metals, was at least equivalent to six hundred thousand pounds sterling; a larger sum than England and Ireland, two centuries ago, yielded annually to Elizabeth—a larger sum than, according to any computation which we have seen, the Grand-duke of Tuscany now derives from a territory of much greater extent. The manufacture of wool alone, employed two hundred factories and thirty thousand workmen. The cloth annually produced sold, at an average, for twelve hundred thousand florins; a sum fairly equal, in exchangeable value, to two millions and a half of our money. Four hundred thousand florins were annually coined. Eighty banks conducted the commercial operations, not of Florence only, but of all Europe. The transactions of these establishments were sometimes of a magnitude which may surprise even the contemporaries of the Barings and the Rothschilds. Two houses advanced to Edward the Third of England upwards of three hundred thousand marks, at a time when the mark contained more silver than fifty shillings of the present day, and when the value of silver was more than quadruple of what it now is. The city and its environs contained a hundred and seventy thousand inhabitants. In the various schools about ten thousand children were taught to read; twelve hundred studied arithmetic; six hundred received a learned education. The progress of elegant literature and of the fine arts was proportioned to that of the public prosperity. Under the despotic successors of Augustus, all the fields of the intellect had been turned into arid wastes, still marked out by formal boundaries, still retaining the traces of old cultivation, but yielding neither flowers nor fruit. The deluge of barbarism came. It swept away all the landmarks. It

obliterated all the signs of former tillage. But it fertilized while it devastated. When it receded, the wilderness was as the garden of God, rejoicing on every side, laughing, clapping its hands, pouring forth in spontaneous abundance every thing brilliant, or fragrant, or nourishing. A new language, characterized by simple sweetness and simple energy, had attained its perfection. No tongue ever furnished more gorgeous and vivid tints to poetry; nor was it long before a poet appeared who knew how to employ them. Early in the fourteenth century came forth the Divine Comedy, beyond comparison the greatest work of imagination which had appeared since the poems of Homer. The following generation produced, indeed, no second Dante; but it was eminently distinguished by general intellectual activity. The study of the Latin writers had never been wholly neglected in Italy. But Petrarch introduced a more profound, liberal, and elegant scholarship; and communicated to his countrymen that enthusiasm for the literature, the history, and the antiquities of Rome, which divided his own heart with a frigid mistress and a more frigid muse. Boccaccio turned their attention to the more sublime and graceful models of Greece.

From this time the admiration of learning and genius became almost an idolatry among the people of Italy. Kings and republics, cardinals and doges, vied with each other in honouring and flattering Petrarch. Embassies from rival states solicited the honour of his instructions. His coronation agitated the court of Naples and the people of Rome as much as the most important political transactions could have done. To collect books and antiques, to found professorships, to patronise men of learning, became almost universal fashions among the great. The spirit of literary research allied itself to that of commercial enterprise. Every place to which the merchant-princes of Florence extended their gigantic traffic, from the bazaars of the Tigris to the monasteries of the Clyde, was ransacked for medals and manuscripts. Architecture, painting, and sculpture were munificently encouraged. Indeed, it would be difficult to name an Italian of eminence during the period of which we speak, who, whatever may have been his general character, did not at least affect a love of letters and of the arts.

Knowledge and public prosperity continued to advance together. Both attained their meridian in the age of Lorenzo the Magnificent. We cannot refrain from quoting the splendid passage, in which the Tuscan Thucydides describes the state of Italy at that period:—"Ridotta tutta in somma pace e tranquillità, coltivata non meno ne' luoghi più montuosi e più sterili che nelle pianure e regioni più fertili, nè sottoposta ad altro imperio che de 'suoi medesimi, non solo era abbondantissima d'abitatori e di ricchezze; ma illustrata sommamente dalla magnificenza di molti principi, dallo splendore di molte nobilissime e billissime città, dalla sedia e maestà delle religione, fioriva d'uomini prestantissimi nell' amministrazione delle cose pubbliche, e d'ingegni molto nobili in tutte le scienze, ed in qualunque arte preclara ed industriosa."* When we peruse this just and splendid description, we can scarcely persuade ourselves that we are reading of times in which the annals of England and France present us only with a frightful prospect of poverty, barbarity, and ignorance. From the oppressions of illiterate masters, and the sufferings of a brutalized peasantry, it is delightful to turn to the opulent and enlightened states of Italy—to the vast and magnificent cities, the ports, the arsenals, the villas, the museums, the libraries, the marts filled with every article of comfort and luxury, the manufactories swarming with artisans, the Apennines covered with rich cultivation up to their very summits, the Po wafting the harvests of Lombardy to the granaries of Venice, and carrying back the silks of Bengal and the firs of Siberia to the palaces of Milan. With peculiar pleasure, every cultivated mind must repose on the fair, the happy, the glorious Florence—on the halls which rung with the mirth of Pulci—the cell where twinkled the midnight lamp of Politian—the statues on which the young eye of Michael Angelo glared with the frenzy of a kindred inspiration—the gardens in which Lorenzo meditated some sparkling song for the May-day dance of the Etrurian Virgins. Alas, for the beautiful city! Alas, for the wit and the learning, the genius and the love!

"Le donne, e cavalier, gli affanni, gli agi,
Che ne'nvogliav' amore e cortesia,
La dove i cuor' son fatti ei malvagi."†

* Guicciardini, lib. i. † Dante Purgatorio, xiv.

A time was at hand, when all the seven vials of the Apocalypse were to be poured forth and shaken out over those pleasant countries—a time for slaughter, famine, beggary, infamy, slavery, despair.

In the Italian States, as in many natural bodies, untimely decrepitude was the penalty of precocious maturity. Their early greatness, and their early decline, are principally to be attributed to the same cause—the preponderance which the towns acquired in the political system.

In a community of hunters or of shepherds, every man easily and necessarily becomes a soldier. His ordinary avocations are perfectly compatible with all the duties of military service. However remote may be the expedition on which he is bound, he finds it easy to transport with him the stock from which he derives his subsistence. The whole people is an army; the whole year a march. Such was the state of society which facilitated the gigantic conquests of Attila and Timour.

But a people which subsists by the cultivation of the earth is in a very different situation. The husbandman is bound to the soil on which he labours. A long campaign would be ruinous to him. Still, his pursuits are such as give to his frame both the active and the passive strength necessary to a soldier. Nor do they, at least in the infancy of agricultural science, demand his uninterrupted attention. At particular times of the year he is almost wholly unemployed, and can, without injury to himself, afford the time necessary for a short expedition. Thus, the legions of Rome were supplied during its earlier wars. The season, during which the farms did not require the presence of the cultivators, sufficed for a short inroad and a battle. These operations, too frequently interrupted to produce decisive results, yet served to keep up among the people a degree of discipline and courage which rendered them, not only secure, but formidable. The archers and billmen of the middle ages, who, with provisions for forty days at their backs, left the fields for the camp, were troops of the same description.

But, when commerce and manufactures begin to flourish, a great change takes place. The sedentary habits of the desk and the loom render the exertions and hardships of

war insupportable. The occupations of traders and artisans require their constant presence and attention. In such a community, there is little superfluous time; but there is generally much superfluous money. Some members of the society are, therefore, hired to relieve the rest from a task inconsistent with their habits and engagements.

The history of Greece is, in this, as in many other respects, the best commentary on the history of Italy. Five hundred years before the Christian era, the citizens of the republics round the Ægean Sea formed perhaps the finest militia that ever existed. As wealth and refinement advanced, the system underwent a gradual alteration. The Ionian States were the first in which commerce and the arts were cultivated,—and the first in which the ancient discipline decayed. Within eighty years after the battle of Platæa, mercenary troops were everywhere plying for battles and sieges. In the time of Demosthenes, it was scarcely possible to persuade or compel the Athenians to enlist for foreign service. The laws of Lycurgus prohibited trade and manufactures. The Spartans, therefore, continued to form a national force, long after their neighbours had begun to hire soldiers. But their military spirit declined with their singular institutions. In the second century, Greece contained only one nation of warriors, the savage highlanders of Ætolia, who were at least ten generations behind their countrymen in civilization and intelligence.

All the causes which produced these effects among the Greeks acted still more strongly on the modern Italians. Instead of a power like Sparta, in its nature warlike, they had among them an ecclesiastical state, in its nature pacific. Where there are numerous slaves, every freeman is induced by the strongest motives to familiarize himself with the use of arms. The commonwealths of Italy did not, like those of Greece, swarm with thousands of these household enemies. Lastly, the mode in which military operations were conducted, during the prosperous times of Italy, was peculiarly unfavourable to the formation of an efficient militia. Men covered with iron from head to foot, armed with ponderous lances, and mounted on horses of the largest breed, were considered as composing the strength of an army. The infantry was regarded as comparatively worthless, and

was neglected till it became really so. These tactics maintained their ground for centuries in most parts of Europe. That foot soldiers could withstand the charge of heavy cavalry was thought utterly impossible, till, towards the close of the fifteenth century, the rude mountaineers of Switzerland dissolved the spell, and astounded the most experienced generals, by receiving the dreaded shock on an impenetrable forest of pikes.

The use of the Grecian spear, the Roman sword, or the modern bayonet, might be acquired with comparative ease. But nothing short of the daily exercise of years could train the man at arms to support his ponderous panoply, and manage his unwieldy weapon. Throughout Europe, this most important branch of war became a separate profession. Beyond the Alps, indeed, though a profession, it was not generally a trade. It was the duty and the amusement of a large class of country gentlemen. It was the service by which they held their lands, and the diversion by which, in the absence of mental resources, they beguiled their leisure. But, in the Northern States of Italy, as we have already remarked, the growing power of the cities, where it had not exterminated this order of men, had completely changed their habits. Here, therefore, the practice of employing mercenaries became universal, at a time when it was almost unknown in other countries.

When war becomes the trade of a separate class, the least dangerous course left to a government is to form that class into a standing army. It is scarcely possible that men can pass their lives in the service of a single state, without feeling some interest in its greatness. Its victories are their victories. Its defeats are their defeats. The contract loses something of its mercantile character. The services of the soldier are considered as the effects of patriotic zeal, his pay as the tribute of national gratitude. To betray the powers which employs him, to be even remiss in its service, are in his eyes the most atrocious and degrading of crimes.

When the princes and commonwealths of Italy began to use hired troops, their wisest course would have been to form separate military establishments. Unhappily this was not done. The mercenary warriors of the Peninsula, instead of being attached to the service of different powers,

were regarded as the common property of all. The connection between the state and its defenders was reduced to the most simple and naked traffic. The adventurer brought his horse, his weapons, his strength, and his experience into the market. Whether the King of Naples or the Duke of Milan, the Pope or the Signory of Florence, struck the bargain was to him a matter of perfect indifference. He was for the highest wages and the longest term. When the campaign for which he had contracted was finished, there was neither law nor punctilio to prevent him from instantly turning his arms against his late masters. The soldier was altogether disjoined from the citizen and from the subject.

The natural consequences followed. Left to the conduct of men who neither loved those whom they defended, nor hated those whom they opposed—who were often bound by stronger ties to the army against which they fought than the state which they served—who lost by the termination of the conflict, and gained by its prolongation, war completely changed its character. Every man came into the field of battle impressed with the knowledge that, in a few days, he might be taking the pay of the power against which he was then employed, and fighting by the side of his enemies against his associates. The strongest interest and the strongest feelings concurred to mitigate the hostility of those who had lately been brethren in arms, and who might soon be brethren in arms once more. Their common profession was a bond of union not to be forgotten, even when they were engaged in the service of contending parties. Hence it was that operations, languid and indecisive beyond any recorded in history, marches and countermarches, pillaging expeditions and blockades, bloodless capitulations and equally bloodless combats, make up the military history of Italy during the course of nearly two centuries. Mighty armies fight from sunrise to sunset. A great victory is won. Thousands of prisoners are taken; and hardly a life is lost! A pitched battle seems to have been really less dangerous than an ordinary civil tumult.

Courage was now no longer necessary even to the military character. Men grew old in camps, and acquired the highest renown by their warlike achievements, without being once required to face serious danger. The political con-

sequences are too well known. The richest and most enlightened part of the world was left undefended, to the assaults of every barbarous invader—to the brutality of Switzerland, the insolence of France, and the fierce rapacity of Arragon. The moral effects which followed from this state of things were still more remarkable.

Among the rude nations which lay beyond the Alps, valour was absolutely indispensable. Without it none could be eminent; few could be secure. Cowardice was, therefore, naturally considered as the foulest reproach. Among the polished Italians, enriched by commerce, governed by law, and passionately attached to literature, every thing was done by superiority of intelligence. Their very wars, more pacific than the peace of their neighbours, required rather civil than military qualifications. Hence, while courage was the point of honour in other countries, ingenuity became the point of honour in Italy.

From these principles were deduced, by processes strictly analogous, two opposite systems of fashionable morality. Through the greater part of Europe, the vices which peculiarly belong to timid dispositions, and which are the natural defence of weakness, fraud, and hypocrisy, have always been most disreputable. On the other hand, the excesses of haughty and daring spirits have been treated with indulgence, and even with respect. The Italians regarded with corresponding lenity those crimes which require self-command, address, quick observation, fertile invention, and profound knowledge of human nature.

Such a prince as our Henry the Fifth would have been the idol of the North. The follies of his youth, the selfish and desolating ambition of his manhood, the Lollards roasted at slow fires, the prisoners massacred on the field of battle, the expiring lease of priestcraft renewed for another century, the dreadful legacy of a causeless and hopeless war, bequeathed to a people who had no interest in its event, every thing is forgotten, but the victory of Agincourt! Francis Sforza, on the other hand, was the model of the Italian hero. He made his employers and his rivals alike his tools. He first overpowered his open enemies by the help of faithless allies; he then armed himself against his allies with the spoils taken from his enemies. By his incomparable dex-

terity, he raised himself from the precarious and dependent situation of a military adventurer to the first throne of Italy. To such a man much was forgiven—hollow friendship, ungenerous enmity, violated faith. Such are the opposite errors which men commit, when their morality is not a science but a taste; when they abandon eternal principles for accidental associations.

We have illustrated our meaning by an instance taken from history. We will select another from fiction. Othello murders his wife; he gives orders for the murder of his lieutenant; he ends by murdering himself. Yet he never loses the esteem and affection of a Northern reader—his intrepid and ardent spirit redeeming every thing. The unsuspecting confidence with which he listens to his adviser, the agony with which he shrinks from the thought of shame, the tempest of passion with which he commits his crimes, and the haughty fearlessness with which he avows them, give an extraordinary interest to his character. Iago, on the contrary, is the object of universal loathing. Many are inclined to suspect that Shakspeare has been seduced into an exaggeration unusual with him, and has drawn a monster who has no archetype in human nature. Now we suspect, that an Italian audience, in the fifteenth century, would have felt very differently. Othello would have inspired nothing but detestation and contempt. The folly with which he trusts to the friendly professions of a man whose promotion he had obstructed—the credulity with which he takes unsupported assertions, and trivial circumstances, for unanswerable proofs—the violence with which he silences the exculpation till the exculpation can only aggravate his misery, would have excited the abhorrence and disgust of the spectators. The conduct of Iago they would assuredly have condemned; but they would have condemned it as we condemn that of his victim. Something of interest and respect would have mingled with their disapprobation. The readiness of his wit, the clearness of his judgment, the skill with which he penetrates the dispositions of others and conceals his own, would have insured to him a certain portion of their esteem.

So wide was the difference between the Italians and their neighbours. A similar difference existed between the Greeks

of the second century before Christ, and their masters the Romans. The conquerors, brave and resolute, faithful to their engagements, and strongly influenced by religious feelings, were, at the same time, ignorant, arbitrary, and cruel. With the vanquished people were deposited all the art, the science, and the literature of the Western world. In poetry, in philosophy, in painting, in architecture, in sculpture, they had no rivals. Their manners were polished, their perceptions acute, their invention ready; they were tolerant, affable, humane. But of courage and sincerity they were almost utterly destitute. The rude warriors who had subdued them consoled themselves for their intellectual inferiority, by remarking that knowledge and taste seemed only to make men atheists, cowards, and slaves. The distinction long continued to be strongly marked, and furnished an admirable subject for the fierce sarcasm of Juvenal.

The citizen of an Italian commonwealth was the Greek of the time of Juvenal, and the Greek of the time of Pericles, joined in one. Like the former, he was timid and pliable, artful and unscrupulous. But, like the latter, he had a country. Its independence and prosperity were dear to him. If his character were degraded by some mean crimes, it was, on the other hand, ennobled by public spirit and by an honourable ambition.

A vice sanctioned by the general opinion is merely a vice. The evil terminates in itself. A vice condemned by the general opinion produces a pernicious effect on the whole character. The former is a local malady, the latter a constitutional taint. When the reputation of the offender is lost, he too often flings the remains of his virtue after it in despair. The Highland gentleman, who, a century ago, lived by taking black mail from his neighbours, committed the same crime for which Wild was accompanied to Tyburn by the huzzas of two hundred thousand people. But there can be no doubt that he was a much less depraved man than Wild. The deed for which Mrs. Brownrigg was hanged sinks into nothing, when compared with the conduct of the Roman who treated the public to a hundred pair of gladiators. Yet we should probably wrong such a Roman if we supposed that his disposition was so cruel as that of Mrs.

Brownrigg. In our own country, a woman forfeits her place in society, by what, in a man, is too commonly considered as an honourable distinction, and, at worst, as a venial error. The consequence is notorious. The moral principle of a woman is frequently more impaired by a single lapse from virtue, than that of a man by twenty years of intrigue. Classical antiquity would furnish us with instances stronger, if possible, than those to which we have referred.

We must apply this principle to the case before us. Habits of dissimulation and falsehood, no doubt, mark a man of our age and country as utterly worthless and abandoned. But it by no means follows that a similar judgment would be just in the case of an Italian of the middle ages. On the contrary, we frequently find those faults, which we are accustomed to consider as certain indications of a mind altogether depraved, in company with great and good qualities, with generosity, with benevolence, with disinterestedness. From such a state of society, Palamedes, in the admirable dialogue of Hume, might have drawn illustrations of his theory as striking as any of those with which Fourli furnished him. These are not, we well know, the lessons which historians are generally most careful to teach, or readers most willing to learn. But they are not, therefore, useless. How Philip disposed his troops at Chæronea, where Hannibal crossed the Alps, whether Mary blew up Darnley, or Siquier shot Charles the Twelfth, and ten thousand other questions of the same description, are in themselves unimportant. The inquiry may amuse us, but the decision leaves us no wiser. He alone reads history aright, who, observing how powerfully circumstances influence the feelings and opinions of men, how often vices pass into virtues, and paradoxes into axioms, learns to distinguish what is accidental and transitory in human nature, from what is essential and immutable.

In this respect no history suggests more important reflections than that of the Tuscan and Lombard commonwealths. The character of the Italian statesman seems, at first sight, a collection of contradictions, a phantom, as monstrous as the portress of hell in Milton, half divinity, half snake, majestic and beautiful above, grovelling and poisonous below. We see a man, whose thoughts and words

have no connection with each other; who never hesitates at an oath when he wishes to seduce, who never wants a pretext when he is inclined to betray. His cruelties spring, not from the heat of blood, or the insanity of uncontrolled power, but from deep and cool meditation. His passions, like well-trained troops, are impetuous by rule, and in their most headstrong fury never forget the discipline to which they have been accustomed. His whole soul is occupied with vast and complicated schemes of ambition. Yet his aspect and language exhibit nothing but philosophic moderation. Hatred and revenge eat into his heart; yet every look is a cordial smile, every gesture a familiar caress. He never excites the suspicion of his adversary by petty provocations. His purpose is disclosed only when it is accomplished. His face is unruffled, his speech is courteous, till vigilance is laid asleep, till a vital point is exposed, till a sure aim is taken; and then he strikes—for the first and last time. Military courage, the boast of the sottish German, the frivolous and prating Frenchman, the romantic and arrogant Spaniard, he neither possesses nor values. He shuns danger, not because he is insensible to shame, but because, in the society in which he lives, timidity has ceased to be shameful. To do an injury openly is, in his estimation, as wicked as to do it secretly, and far less profitable. With him the most honourable means are—the surest, the speediest, and the darkest. He cannot comprehend how a man should scruple to deceive him whom he does not scruple to destroy. He would think it madness to declare open hostilities against a rival whom he might stab in a friendly embrace, or poison in a consecrated wafer.

Yet this man, black with the vices which *we* consider as most loathsome—traitor, hypocrite, coward, assassin—was by no means destitute even of those virtues which we generally consider as indicating superior elevation of character. In civil courage, in perseverance, in presence of mind, those barbarous warriors who were foremost in the battle or the breach, were far his inferiors. Even the dangers which he avoided, with a caution almost pusillanimous, never confused his perceptions, never paralysed his inventive faculties, never wrung out one secret from his ready tongue and his inscrutable brow. Though a dangerous enemy, and a still more

dangerous accomplice, he was a just and beneficent ruler. With so much unfairness in his policy, there was an extraordinary degree of fairness in his intellect. Indifferent to truth in the transactions of life, he was honestly devoted to the pursuit of truth in the researches of speculation. Wanton cruelty was not in his nature. On the contrary, where no political object was at stake, his disposition was soft and humane. The susceptibility of his nerves, and the activity of his imagination, inclined him to sympathize with the feelings of others, and to delight in the charities and courtesies of social life. Perpetually descending to actions which might seem to mark a mind diseased through all its faculties, he had nevertheless an exquisite sensibility both for the natural and the moral sublime, for every graceful and every lofty conception. Habits of petty intrigue and dissimulation might have rendered him incapable of great general views, but that the expanding effect of his philosophical studies counteracted the narrowing tendency. He had the keenest enjoyment of wit, eloquence, and poetry. The fine arts profited alike by the severity of his judgment, and the liberality of his patronage. The portraits of some of the remarkable Italians of those times are perfectly in harmony with this description. Ample and majestic foreheads; brows strong and dark, but not frowning; eyes of which the calm full gaze, while it expresses nothing, seems to discern every thing; cheeks pale with thought and sedentary habits; lips formed with feminine delicacy, but compressed with more than masculine decision, mark out men at once enterprising and apprehensive; men equally skilled in detecting the purpose of others, and in concealing their own; men who must have been formidable enemies and unsafe allies; but men, at the same time, whose tempers were mild and equable, and who possesssed an amplitude and subtlety of mind, which would have rendered them eminent either in active or in contemplative life, and fitted them either to govern or to instruct mankind.

Every age and every nation has certain characteristic vices, which prevail almost universally, which scarcely any person scruples to avow, and which even rigid moralists but faintly censure. Succeeding generations change the fashion of their morals, with their hats and their coaches; take

some other kind of wickedness under their patronage, and wonder at the depravity of their ancestors. Nor is this all. Posterity, that high court of appeal which is never tired of eulogizing its own judgment and discernment, acts, on such occasions, like a Roman dictator after a general mutiny. Finding the delinquents too numerous to be all punished, it selects some of them at hazard, to bear the whole penalty of an offence in which they are not more deeply implicated than those who escape. Whether decimation be a convenient mode of military execution, we know not; but we solemnly protest against the introduction of such a principle into the philosophy of history.

In the present instance, the lot has fallen on Machiavelli: a man whose public conduct was upright and honourable, whose views of morality, where they differed from those of the persons around him, seem to have differed for the better, and whose only fault was, that, having adopted some of the maxims then generally received, he arranged them more luminously, and expressed them more forcibly, than any other writer.

Having now, we hope, in some degree cleared the personal character of Machiavelli, we come to the consideration of his works. As a poet, he is not entitled to a very high place. The Decennali are merely abstracts of the history of his own times in rhyme. The style and versification are seduously modelled on those of Dante. But the manner of Dante, like that of every other great original poet, was suited only to his own genius, and to his own subject. The distorted and rugged diction which gives to his unearthly imagery a yet more unearthly character, and seems to proceed from a man labouring to express that which is inexpressible, is at once mean and extravagant when misemployed by an imitator. The moral poems are in every point superior. That on Fortune, in particular, and that on Opportunity, exhibit both justness of thought and fertility of fancy. The Golden Ass has nothing but the name in common with the Romance of Apuleius, a book which, in spite of its irregular plan and its detestable style, is among the most fascinating in the Latin language, and in which the merits of Le Sage and Radcliffe, Bunyan and Crébillon, are singularly united. The poem of Machiavelli, which is evidently un-

finished, is carefully copied from the earlier cantos of the Inferno. The writer loses himself in a wood. He is terrified by monsters, and relieved by a beautiful damsel. His protectress conducts him to a large menagerie of emblematical beasts, whose peculiarities are described at length. The manner as well as the plan of the Divine Comedy is carefully imitated. Whole lines are transferred from it. But they no longer produce their wonted effect. Virgil advises the husbandman who removes a plant from one spot to another to mark its bearings on the cork, and to place it in the same position with regard to the different points of the heaven in which it formerly stood. A similar care is necessary in poetical transplantation. Where it is neglected, we perpetually see the flowers of language, which have bloomed on one soil, wither on another. Yet the Golden Ass is not altogether destitute of merit. There is considerable ingenuity in the allegory, and some vivid colouring in the descriptions.

The comedies deserve more attention. The Mandragola, in particular, is superior to the best of Goldoni, and inferior only to the best of Molière. It is the work of a man who, if he had devoted himself to the drama, would probably have attained the highest eminence, and produced a permanent and salutary effect on the national taste. This we infer, not so much from the degree, as from the kind of its excellence. There are compositions which indicate still greater talent, and which are perused with still greater delight, from which we should have drawn very different conclusions. Books quite worthless are quite harmless. The sure sign of the general decline of an art is the frequent occurrence, not of deformity, but of misplaced beauty. In general, tragedy is corrupted by eloquence, and comedy by wit.

The real object of the drama is the exhibition of the human character. This, we conceive, is no arbitrary canon, originating in local and temporary associations, like those which regulate the number of acts in a play, or syllables in a line. It is the very essence of a species of composition, in which every idea is coloured by passing through the medium of an imagined mind. To this fundamental law every other regulation is subordinate. The situations which most

signally develope character form the best plot. The mother tongue of the passions is the best style.

The principle, rightly understood, does not debar the poet from any grace of composition. There is no style in which some man may not, under some circumstances, express himself. There is therefore no style which the drama rejects, none which it does not occasionally require. It is in the discernment of place, of time, and of person, that the inferior artists fail. The brilliant rodomontade of Mercutio, the elaborate declamation of Antony, are, where Shakspeare has placed them, natural and pleasing. But Dryden would have made Mercutio challenge Tybalt, in hyperboles as fanciful as those in which he describes the chariot of Mab.—Corneille would have represented Antony as scolding and coaxing Cleopatra with all the measured rhetoric of a funeral oration.

No writers have injured the Comedy of England so deeply as Congreve and Sheridan. Both were men of splendid wit and polished taste. Unhappily they made all their characters in their own likeness. Their works bear the same relation to the legitimate drama which a transparency bears to a painting; no delicate touches; no hues imperceptibly fading into each other; the whole is lighted up with an universal glare. Outlines and tints are forgotten, in the common blaze which illuminates all. The flowers and fruits of the intellect abound; but it is the abundance of a jungle, not of a garden—unwholesome, bewildering, unprofitable from its very plenty, rank from its very fragrance. Every fop, every boor, every valet is a man of wit. The very butts and dupes, Tattle, Urkwould, Puff, Acres, outshine the whole Hôtel de Rambouillet. To prove the whole system of this school absurd, it is only necessary to apply the test which dissolved the enchanted Florimel—to place the true by the false Thalia, to contrast the most celebrated characters which have been drawn by the writers of whom we speak, with the Bastard in King John, or the Nurse in Romeo and Juliet. It was not surely from want of wit that Shakspeare adopted so different a manner. Benedick and Beatrice throw Mirabel and Millamant into the shade. All the good sayings of the facetious hours of Absolute and Surface might have been clipped from the single character of Falstaff with-

out being missed. It would have been easy for that fertile mind to have given Bardolph and Shallow as much wit as Prince Hal, and to have made Dogberry and Verges retort on each other in sparkling epigrams. But he knew, to use his own admirable language, that such indiscriminate prodigality was "*from* the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was, and is, to hold, as it were, the mirror up to Nature."

This digression will enable our readers to understand what we mean when we say that, in the Mandragola, Machiavelli has proved that he completely understood the nature of the dramatic art, and possessed talents which would have enabled him to excel in it. By the correct and vigorous delineation of human nature, it produces interest without a pleasing or skilful plot, and laughter without the least ambition of wit. The lover, not a very delicate or generous lover, and his adviser the parasite, are drawn with spirit. The hypocritical confessor is an admirable portrait. He is, if we mistake not, the original of Father Dominic, the best comic character of Dryden. But old Nicias is the glory of the piece. We cannot call to mind any thing that resembles him. The follies which Molière ridicules are those of affectation, not those of fatuity. Coxcombs and pedants, not simpletons, are his game. Shakspeare has indeed a vast assortment of fools; but the precise species of which we speak is not, if we remember right, to be found there. Shallow is a fool. But his animal spirits supply, to a certain degree, the place of cleverness. His talk is to that of Sir John what soda-water is to champagne. It has the effervescence, though not the body or the flavour. Slender and Sir Andrew Aguecheek are fools, troubled with an uneasy consciousness of their folly, which, in the latter, produces a most edifying meekness and docility, and in the former, awkwardness, obstinacy, and confusion. Cloten is an arrogant fool, Osric a foppish fool, Ajax a savage fool; but Nicias is, as Thersites says of Patroclus, a fool positive. His mind is occupied by no strong feeling; it takes every character, and retains none; its aspect is diversified, not by passions, but by faint and transitory semblances of passion, a mock joy, a mock fear, a mock love, a mock pride, which chase each other like shadows over its surface, and vanish

as soon as they appear. He is just idiot enough to be an object, not of pity or horror, but of ridicule. He bears some resemblance to poor Calandrino, whose mishaps, as recounted by Boccaccio, have made all Europe merry for more than four centuries. He perhaps resembles still more closely Simon de Villa, to whom Bruno and Buffulmacco promised the love of the Countess Civillari.* Nicias is, like Simon, of a learned profession; and the dignity with which he wears the doctoral fur renders his absurdities infinitely more grotesque. The old Tuscan is the very language for such a being. Its peculiar simplicity gives even to the most forcible reasoning and the most brilliant wit an infantine air, generally delightful, but to a foreign reader sometimes a little ludicrous. Heroes and statesmen seem to lisp when they use it. It becomes Nicias incomparably, and renders all his silliness infinitely more silly.

We may add, that the verses, with which the Mandragola is interspersed, appear to us to be the most spirited and correct of all that Machiavelli has written in metre. He seems to have entertained the same opinion; for he has introduced some of them in other places. The contemporaries of the author were not blind to the merits of this striking piece. It was acted in Florence with the greatest success. Leo the Tenth was among its admirers, and by his order it was represented at Rome.†

The Clizia is an imitation of the Casina of Plautus, which is itself an imitation of the lost Κληρουμενοι of Diphilus. Plautus was, unquestionably, one of the best Latin writers. His works are copies; but they have in an extraordinary degree the air of originals. We infinitely prefer the slovenly exuberance of his fancy, and the clumsy vigour of his diction, to the artfully disguised poverty and elegant languor of Terence. But the Casina is by no means one of his best plays; nor is it one which offers great facilities to an imita-

* Decameron, Giorn. viii. Nov. 9.

† Nothing can be more evident than that Paulus Jovius designates the Mandragola under the name of the Nicias. We should not have noticed what is so perfectly obvious, were it not that this natural and palpable misnomer has led the sagacious and industrious Bayle into a gross error.

tor. The story is as alien from modern habits of life, as the manner in which it is developed from the modern fashion of composition. The lover remains in the country, and the heroine is locked up in her chamber during the whole action, leaving their fate to be decided by a foolish father, a cunning mother, and two knavish servants. Machiavelli has executed his task with judgment and taste. He has accommodated the plot to a different state of society, and has very dexterously connected it with the history of his own times. The relation of the trick put on the doating old lover is exquisitely humorous. It is far superior to the corresponding passage in the Latin comedy, and scarcely yields to the account which Falstaff gives of his ducking.

Two other comedies, without titles, the one in prose, the other in verse, appear among the works of Machiavelli. The former is very short, lively enough, but of no great value. The latter we can scarcely believe to be genuine. Neither its merits nor its defects remind us of the reputed author. It was first printed in 1796, from a manuscript discovered in the celebrated library of the Strozzi. Its genuineness, if we have been rightly informed, is established solely by the comparison of hands. Our suspicions are strengthened by the circumstance, that the same manuscript contained a description of the plague of 1527, which has also, in consequence, been added to the works of Machiavelli. Of this last composition the strongest external evidence would scarcely induce us to believe him guilty. Nothing was ever written more detestable, in matter and manner. The narrations, the reflections, the jokes, the lamentations, are all the very worst of their respective kinds, at once trite and affected—threadbare tinsel from the Ragfairs and Monmouth-streets of literature. A foolish school-boy might perhaps write it, and, after he had written it, think it much finer than the incomparable introduction of the Decameron. But that a shrewd statesman, whose earliest works are characterized by manliness of thought and language, should, at nearly sixty years of age, descend to such puerility, is utterly inconceivable.

The little Novel of Belphegor is pleasantly conceived and pleasantly told. But the extravagance of the satire in some measure injures its effect. Machiavelli was un-

happily married; and his wish to avenge his own cause and that of his brethren in misfortune, carried him beyond even the license of fiction. Jonson seems to have combined some hints taken from this tale with others from Boccaccio, in the plot of *The Devil is an Ass*—a play which, though not the most highly finished of his compositions, is perhaps that which exhibits the strongest proofs of genius.

The political correspondence of Machiavelli, first published in 1767, is unquestionably genuine and highly valuable. The unhappy circumstances in which his country was placed, during the greater part of his public life, gave extraordinary encouragement to diplomatic talents. From the moment that Charles the Eighth descended from the Alps, the whole character of Italian politics was changed. The governments of the Peninsula cease to form an independent system. Drawn from their old orbit by the attraction of the larger bodies which now approached them, they became mere satellites of France and Spain. All their disputes, internal and external, were decided by foreign influence. The contests of opposite factions were carried on, not as formerly in the senate-house or in the market-place, but in the antechambers of Louis and Ferdinand. Under these circumstances, the prosperity of the Italian States depended far more on the ability of their foreign agents than on the conduct of those who were intrusted with the domestic administration. The ambassador had to discharge functions far more delicate than transmitting orders of knighthood, introducing tourists, or presenting his brethren with the homage of his high consideration. He was an advocate, to whose management the dearest interests of his clients were intrusted; a spy, clothed with an inviolable character. Instead of consulting the dignity of those whom he represented by a reserved manner and an ambiguous style, he was to plunge into all the intrigues of the court at which he resided, to discover and flatter every weakness of the prince who governed his employers, of the favourite who governed the prince, and of the lacquey who governed the favourite. He was to compliment the mistress and bribe the confessor, to panegyrize or supplicate, to laugh or weep, to accommodate himself to every caprice, to lull every suspicion, to treasure every hint, to be every thing,

to observe every thing, to endure every thing. High as the art of political intrigue had been carried in Italy, these were times which required it all.

On these arduous errands Machiavelli was frequently employed. He was sent to treat with the King of the Romans and with the Duke of Valentinois. He was twice ambassador at the court of Rome, and thrice at that of France. In these missions, and in several others of inferior importance, he acquitted himself with great dexterity. His despatches form one of the most amusing and instructive collections extant. We meet with none of the mysterious jargon so common in modern state-papers, the flash-language of political robbers and sharpers. The narratives are clear and agreeably written; the remarks on men and things clever and judicious. The conversations are reported in a spirited and characteristic manner. We find ourselves introduced into the presence of the men who, during twenty eventful years swayed the destinies of Europe. Their wit and their folly, their fretfulness and their merriment are exposed to us. We are admitted to overhear their chat, and to watch their familiar gestures. It is interesting and curious to recognise, in circumstances which elude the notice of historians, the feeble violence and shallow cunning of Louis the Twelfth; the bustling insignificance of Maximilian, cursed with an impotent pruriency for renown, rash yet timid, obstinate yet fickle, always in a hurry, yet always too late;—the fierce and haughty energy which gave dignity to the eccentricities of Julius;—the soft and graceful manners which masked the insatiable ambition and the implacable hatred of Borgia.

We have mentioned Borgia. It is impossible not to pause for a moment on the name of a man, in whom the political morality of Italy was so strongly personified, partially blended with the sterner lineaments of the Spanish character. On two important occasions Machiavelli was admitted to his society; once, at the moment when his splendid villany achieved its most signal triumph, when he caught in one snare and crushed at one blow all his most formidable rivals, and again when, exhausted by disease, and overwhelmed by misfortunes, which no human prudence could have averted, he was the prisoner of the

deadliest enemy of his house. These interviews, between the greatest speculative and the greatest practical statesmen of the age, are fully described in the correspondence, and form perhaps the most interesting part of it. From some passages in the *Prince*, and perhaps also from some indistinct traditions, several writers have supposed a connection between those remarkable men much closer than ever existed. The envoy has even been accused of promoting the crimes of the artful and merciless tyrant. But from the official documents it is clear that their intercourse, though ostensibly amicable, was in reality hostile. It cannot be doubted, however, that the imagination of Machiavelli was strongly impressed and his speculations on government coloured, by the observations which he made on the singular character, and equally singular fortunes, of a man who, under such disadvantages, had achieved such exploits; who, when sensuality, varied through innumerable forms, could no longer stimulate his sated mind, found a more powerful and durable excitement in the intense thirst of empire and revenge;—who emerged from the sloth and luxury of the Roman purple, the first prince and general of the age;—who, trained in an unwarlike profession, formed a gallant army out of the dregs of an unwarlike people;—who, after acquiring sovereignty by destroying his enemies, acquired popularity by destroying his tools;—who had begun to employ for the most salutary ends the power which he had attained by the most atrocious means; who tolerated within the sphere of his iron despotism no plunderer or oppressor but himself;—and who fell at last amidst the mingled curses and regrets of a people, of whom his genius had been the wonder, and might have been the salvation. Some of those crimes of Borgia, which to us appear the most odious, would not, from causes which we have already considered, have struck an Italian of the fifteenth century with equal horror. Patriotic feeling also might induce Machiavelli to look, with some indulgence and regret, on the memory of the only leader who could have defended the independence of Italy against the confederate spoilers of Cambray.

On this subject, Machiavelli felt most strongly. Indeed, the expulsion of the foreign tyrants, and the restoration of

that golden age which had preceded the irruption of Charles the Eighth, were projects which, at that time, fascinated all the master-spirits of Italy. The magnificent vision delighted the great but ill-regulated mind of Julius. It divided with manuscripts and sauces, painters and falcons, the attention of the frivolous Leo. It prompted the generous treason of Morone. It imparted a transient energy to the feeble mind and body of the last Sforza. It excited for one moment an honest ambition in the false heart of Pescara. Ferocity and insolence were not among the vices of the national character. To the discriminating cruelties of politicians, committed for great ends on select victims, the moral code of the Italians was too indulgent. But though they might have recourse to barbarity as an expedient, they did not require it as a stimulant. They turned with loathing from the atrocity of the strangers who seemed to love blood for its own sake, who, not content with subjugating, were impatient to destroy; who found a fiendish pleasure in razing magnificent cities, cutting the throats of enemies who cried for quarter, or suffocating an unarmed people by thousands in the caverns to which they had fled for safety. Such were the scenes which daily excited the terror and disgust of a people, amongst whom, till lately, the worst that a soldier had to fear in a pitched battle was the loss of his horse, and the expense of his ransom. The swinish intemperance of Switzerland, the wolfish avarice of Spain, the gross licentiousness of the French, indulged in violation of hospitality, of decency, of love itself, the wanton inhumanity which was common to all the invaders, had rendered them subjects of deadly hatred to the inhabitants of the Peninsula.* The wealth which had been accumulated during centuries of prosperity and repose was rapidly melting away. The intellectual superiority of the oppressed people only rendered them more keenly sensible of their political degradation. Literature and taste, indeed, still disguised, with a flush of hectic loveliness and brilliancy, the ravages

* The opening stanzas of the Fourteenth Canto of the Orlando Furioso give a frightful picture of the state of Italy in those times. Yet, strange to say, Ariosto is speaking of the conduct of those who called themselves allies.

of an incurable decay. The iron had not yet entered into the soul. The time was not yet come when eloquence was to be gagged and reason to be hoodwinked—when the harp of the poet was to be hung on the willows of Arno, and the right hand of the painter to forget its cunning. Yet a discerning eye might even then have seen that genius and learning would not long survive the state of things from which they had sprung;—that the great men whose talents gave lustre to that melancholy period had been formed under the influence of happier days, and would leave no successors behind them. The times which shine with the greatest splendour in literary history are not always those to which the human mind is most indebted. Of this we may be convinced, by comparing the generation which follows them with that which preceded them. The first fruits which are reaped under a bad system often spring from seed sown under a good one. Thus it was, in some measure, with the Augustan age. Thus it was with the age of Raphael and Ariosto, of Aldus and Vida.

Machiavelli deeply regretted the misfortunes of his country, and clearly discerned the cause and the remedy. It was the military system of the Italian people which had extinguished their valour and discipline, and rendered their wealth an easy prey to every foreign plunderer. The secretary projected a scheme alike honourable to his heart and to his intellect, for abolishing the use of mercenary troops, and organizing a national militia.

The exertions which he made to effect this great object ought alone to rescue his name from obloquy. Though his situation and his habits were pacific, he studied with intense assiduity the theory of war. He made himself master of all its details. The Florentine government entered into his views. A council of war was appointed. Levies were decreed. The indefatigable minister flew from place to place in order to superintend the execution of his design. The times were, in some respects, favourable to the experiment. The system of military tactics had undergone a great revolution. The cavalry was no longer considered as forming the strength of an army. The hours which a citizen could spare from his ordinary employments, though by no means sufficient to familiarize him with the exercise of a man-at-

arms, might render him an useful foot-soldier. The dread of a foreign yoke, of plunder, massacre, and conflagration, might have conquered that repugnance to military pursuits, which both the industry and the idleness of great towns commonly generate. For a time the scheme promised well. The new troops acquitted themselves respectably in the field. Machiavelli looked with parental rapture on the success of his plan; and began to hope that the arms of Italy might once more be formidable to the barbarians of the Tagus and the Rhine. But the tide of misfortune came on before the barriers which should have withstood it were prepared. For a time, indeed, Florence might be considered as peculiarly fortunate. Famine and sword and pestilence had devastated the fertile plains and stately cities of the Po. All the curses denounced of old against Tyre seemed to have fallen on Venice. Her merchants already stood afar off, lamenting for their great city. The time seemed near when the sea-weed should overgrow her silent Rialto, and the fisherman wash his nets in her deserted arsenal. Naples had been four times conquered and reconquered, by tyrants equally indifferent to its welfare, and equally greedy for its spoils. Florence, as yet, had only to endure degradation and extortion, to submit to the mandates of foreign powers, to buy over and over again, at an enormous price, what was already justly her own, to return thanks for being wronged, and to ask pardon for being in the right. She was at length deprived of the blessings even of this infamous and servile repose. Her military and political institutions were swept away together. The Medici returned, in the train of foreign invaders, from their long exile. The policy of Machiavelli was abandoned; and his public services were requited with poverty, imprisonment, and torture.

The fallen statesman still clung to his project with unabated ardour. With the view of vindicating it from some popular objections, and of refuting some prevailing errors on the subject of military science, he wrote his seven books on the Art of War. This excellent work is in the form of a dialogue. The opinions of the writer are put into the mouth of Fabrizio Colonna, a powerful nobleman of the Ecclesiastical State, and an officer of distinguished merit in the service of the King of Spain. He visits Flo-

rence on his way from Lombardy to his own domains. He is invited to meet some friends at the house of Cosimo Rucellui, an amiable and accomplished young man, whose early death Machiavelli feelingly deplores. After partaking of an elegant entertainment, they retire from the heat into the most shady recesses of the garden. Fabrizio is struck by the sight of some uncommon plants. His host informs him that, though rare in modern days, they are frequently mentioned by the classical authors, and that his grandfather, like many other Italians, amused himself with practising the ancient methods of gardening. Fabrizio expresses his regret that those who, in later times affected the manners of the old Romans, should select for imitation their most trifling pursuits. This leads to a conversation on the decline of military discipline, and on the best means of restoring it. The institution of the Florentine militia is ably defended; and several improvements are suggested in the details.

The Swiss and the Spaniards were, at that time, regarded as the best soldiers in Europe. The Swiss battalion consisted of pikemen, and bore a close resemblance to the Greek phalanx. The Spaniards, like the soldiers of Rome, were armed with the sword and the shield. The victories of Flaminius and Æmilius over the Macedonian kings seem to prove the superiority of the weapons used by the legions.

The same experiments had been recently tried with the same result at the battle of Ravenna, one of those tremendous days into which human folly and wickedness compress the whole devastation of a famine or a plague. In that memorable conflict, the infantry of Arragon, the old companions of Gonsalvo, deserted by all their allies, hewed a passage through the thickest of the imperial pikes, and effected an unbroken retreat, in the face of the gendarmerie of De Foix, and the renowned artillery of Este. Fabrizio, or rather Machiavelli, proposes to combine the two systems, to arm the foremost lines with the pike, for the purpose of repulsing cavalry, and those in the rear with the sword, as being a weapon better adapted for every purpose. Throughout the work, the author expresses the highest admiration of the military science of the ancient Romans, and the greatest contempt for the maxims which had been in vogue amongst

the Italian commanders of the preceding generation. He prefers infantry to cavalry; and fortified camps to fortified towns. He is inclined to substitute rapid movements, and decisive engagements, for the languid and dilatory operations of his countrymen. He attaches very little importance to the invention of gunpowder. Indeed, he seems to think that it ought scarcely to produce any change in the mode of arming or of disposing troops. The general testimony of historians, it must be allowed, seems to prove, that the ill-constructed and ill-served artillery of those times, though useful in a siege, was of little value on the field of battle.

Of the tactics of Machiavelli we will not venture to give an opinion; but we are certain that his book is most able and interesting. As a commentary on the history of his times it is invaluable. The ingenuity, the grace, and the perspicuity of the style, and the eloquence and animation of particular passages, must give pleasure even to readers who take no interest in the subject.

The *Prince* and the Discourses on Livy were written after the fall of the republican government. The former was dedicated to the young Lorenzo de Medici. This circumstance seems to have disgusted the contemporaries of the writer far more than the doctrines which have rendered the name of the work odious in later times. It was considered as an indication of political apostasy. The fact, however, seems to have been that Machiavelli, despairing of *the liberty* of Florence, was inclined to support any government which might preserve her *independence*. The interval which separated a democracy and a despotism, Soderini and Lorenzo, seemed to vanish when compared with the difference between the former and the present state of Italy; between the security, the opulence, and the repose which it had enjoyed under its native rulers, and the misery in which it had been plunged since the fatal year in which the first foreign tyrant had descended from the Alps. The noble and pathetic exhortation with which the *Prince* concludes, shows how strongly the writer felt upon this subject.

The *Prince* traces the progress of an ambitious man, the Discourses the progress of an ambitious people. The same principles on which in the former work the elevation of an

individual are explained, are applied in the latter to the longer duration and more complex interests of society. To a modern statesman, the form of the Discourses may appear to be puerile. In truth, Livy is not a historian on whom much reliance can be placed, even in cases where he must have possessed considerable means of information. And his first Decade, to which Machiavelli has confined himself, is scarcely entitled to more credit than our chronicle of British kings who reigned before the Roman invasion. But his commentator is indebted to him for little more than a few texts, which he might as easily have extracted from the Vulgate or the Decameron. The whole train of thought is original.

On the peculiar immorality which has rendered the *Prince* unpopular, and which is almost equally discernible in the Discourses, we have already given our opinion at length. We have attempted to show that it belonged rather to the age than the man; that it was a partial taint, and by no means implied general depravity. We cannot, however, deny that it is a great blemish, and that it considerably diminishes the pleasure which, in other respects, those works must afford to every intelligent mind.

It is, indeed, impossible to conceive a more healthful and vigorous constitution of the understanding than that which these works indicate. The qualities of the active and the contemplative statesman appear to have been blended, in the mind of the writer, into a rare and exquisite harmony. His skill in the details of business had not been acquired at the expense of his general powers. It had not rendered his mind less comprehensive, but it had served to correct his speculations, and to impart to them that vivid and practical character which so widely distinguishes them from the vague theories of most political philosophers.

Every man who has seen the world knows that nothing is so useless as a general maxim. If it be very moral and very true, it may serve for a copy to a charity-boy. If, like those of Rochefoucauld, it be sparkling and whimsical, it may make an excellent motto for an essay. But few, indeed, of the many wise apophthegms which have been uttered, from the time of the Seven Sages of Greece to that of Poor Richard, have prevented a single foolish action.

We give the highest and the most peculiar praise to the precepts of Machiavelli, when we say that they may frequently be of real use in regulating the conduct, not so much because they are more just or more profound than those which might be culled from other authors, as because they can be more readily applied to the problems of real life.

There are errors in these works. But they are errors which a writer situated like Machiavelli could scarcely avoid. They arise, for the most part, from a single defect which appears to us to pervade his whole system. In his political scheme the means had been more deeply considered than the ends. The great principle, that societies and laws exist only for the purpose of increasing the sum of private happiness, is not recognised with sufficient clearness. The good of the body, distinct from the good of the members, and sometimes hardly compatible with it, seems to be the object which he proposes to himself. Of all political fallacies, this has had the widest and the most mischievous operation. The state of society in the little commonwealths of Greece, the close connection and mutual dependence of the citizens, and the severity of the laws of war, tended to encourage an opinion which, under such circumstances, could hardly be called erroneous. The interests of every individual were inseparably bound up with those of the state. An invasion destroyed his cornfields and vineyards, drove him from his home, and compelled him to encounter all the hardships of a military life. A peace restored him to security and comfort. A victory doubled the number of his slaves. A defeat perhaps made him a slave himself. When Pericles, in the Peloponnesian war, told the Athenians that if their country triumphed, their private losses would speedily be repaired, but that if their arms failed of success, every individual amongst them would probably be ruined,* he spoke no more than the truth. He spoke to men whom the tribute of vanquished cities supplied with food and clothing, with the luxury of the bath and the amusements of the theatre, on whom the greatness of their country conferred rank, and before whom the members of less prosperous communities trembled; and to men

* Thucydides, ii. 62.

who, in case of a change in the public fortunes, would at least be deprived of every comfort and every distinction which they enjoyed. To be butchered on the smoking ruins of their city, to be dragged in chains to a slave-market, to see one child torn from them to dig in the quarries of Sicily, and another to guard the harems of Persepolis; those were the frequent and probable consequences of national calamities. Hence, among the Greeks, patriotism became a governing principle, or rather an ungovernable passion. Both their legislators and their philosophers took it for granted that, in providing for the strength and greatness of the state, they sufficiently provided for the happiness of the people. The writers of the Roman empire lived under despots into whose dominion a hundred nations were melted down, and whose gardens would have covered the little commonwealths of Phlius and Platæa. Yet they continued to employ the same language, and to cant about the duty of sacrificing every thing to a country to which they owed nothing.

Causes similar to those which had influenced the disposition of the Greeks, operated powerfully on the less vigorous and daring character of the Italians. They, too, were members of small communities. Every man was deeply interested in the welfare of the society to which he belonged—a partaker in its wealth and its poverty, in its glory and its shame. In the age of Machiavelli, this was peculiarly the case. Public events had produced an immense sum of money to private citizens. The Northern invaders had brought want to their boards, infamy to their beds, fire to their roofs, and the knife to their throats. It was natural that a man who lived in times like these should overrate the importance of those measures by which a nation is rendered formidable to its neighbours, and undervalue those which make it prosperous within itself.

Nothing is more remarkable in the political treatises of Machiavelli than the fairness of mind which they indicate. It appears where the author is in the wrong almost as strongly as where he is in the right. He never advances a false opinion because it is new or splendid, because he can clothe it in a happy phrase or defend it by an ingenious sophism. His errors are at once explained by a reference

to the circumstances in which he was placed. They evidently were not sought out; they lay in his way, and could scarcely be avoided. Such mistakes must necessarily be committed by early speculators in every science.

In this respect it is amusing to compare the *Prince* and the *Discourses* with the Spirit of Laws. Montesquieu enjoys, perhaps, a wider celebrity than any political writer of modern Europe. Something he doubtless owes to his merit, but much more to his fortune. He had the good luck of a valentine. He caught the eye of the French nation at the moment when it was waking from the long sleep of political and religious bigotry; and in consequence he became a favourite. The English at that time considered a Frenchman who talked about constitutional checks and fundamental laws, as a prodigy not less astonishing than the learned pig or the musical infant. Specious but shallow, studious of effect, indifferent to truth, eager to build a system, but careless of collecting those materials out of which alone a sound and durable system can be built, he constructed theories as rapidly and as slightly as card-houses—no sooner projected than completed—no sooner completed than blown away—no sooner blown away than forgotten. Machiavelli errs only because his experience, acquired in a very peculiar state of society, could not always enable him to calculate the effect of institutions differing from those of which he had observed the operation. Montesquieu errs because he has a fine thing to say and is resolved to say it. If the phenomena which lie before him will not suit his purpose, all history must be ransacked. If nothing established by authentic testimony can be raked or chipped to suit his Procrustean hypothesis, he puts up with some monstrous fable about Siam, or Bantam, or Japan, told by writers, compared with whom Lucian and Gulliver were veracious—liars by a double right, as travellers and as Jesuits.

Propriety of thought and propriety of diction are commonly found together. Obscurity and affectation are the two greatest faults of style. Obscurity of expression generally springs from confusion of ideas; and the same wish to dazzle, at any cost, which produces affectation in the manner of a writer, is likely to produce sophistry in his reasonings. The judicious and candid mind of Machiavelli

shows itself in his luminous, manly, and polished language. The style of Montesquieu, on the other hand, indicates in every page a lively and ingenious, but an unsound mind. Every trick of expression, from the mysterious conciseness of an oracle to the flippancy of a Parisian coxcomb, is employed to disguise the fallacy of some positions, and the triteness of others. Absurdities are brightened into epigrams; truisms are darkened into enigmas. It is with difficulty that the strongest eye can sustain the glare with which some parts are illuminated, or penetrate the shade in which others are concealed.

The political works of Machiavelli derive a peculiar interest from the mournful earnestness which he manifests, whenever he touches on topics connected with the calamities of his native land. It is difficult to conceive any situation more painful than that of a great man condemned to watch the lingering agony of an exhausted country, to tend it during the alternate fits of stupefaction and raving which precedes its dissolution, to see the symptoms of vitality disappear one by one, till nothing is left but coldness, darkness, and corruption. To this joyless and thankless duty was Machiavelli called. In the energetic language of the prophet, he was "mad for the sight of his eyes which he saw," —disunion in the council, effeminacy in the camp, liberty extinguished, commerce decaying, national honour sullied, an enlightened and flourishing people given over to the ferocity of ignorant savages. Though his opinions had not escaped the contagion of that political immorality which was common among his countrymen, his natural disposition seems to have been rather stern and impetuous than pliant and artful. When the misery and degradation of Florence and the foul outrage which he had himself sustained roused his mind, the smooth craft of his profession and his nation is exchanged for the honest bitterness of scorn and anger. He speaks like one sick of the calamitous times and abject people among whom his lot is cast. He pines for the strength and glory of ancient Rome, for the fasces of Brutus and the sword of Scipio, the gravity of the curule chair, and the bloody pomp of the triumphal sacrifice. He seems to be transported back to the days, when eight hundred thousand Italian warriors sprung to arms at the rumour of

a Gallic invasion. He breathes all the spirit of those intrepid and haughty patricians, who forgot the dearest ties of nature in the claims of public duty, who looked with disdain on the elephants and on the gold of Pyrrhus, and listened with unaltered composure to the tremendous tidings of Cannæ. Like an ancient temple deformed by the barbarous architecture of a later age, his character acquires an interest from the very circumstances which debase it. The original proportions are rendered more striking, by the contrast which they present to the mean and incongruous additions.

The influence of the sentiments which we have described was not apparent in his writings alone. His enthusiasm, barred from the career which it would have selected for itself, seems to have found a vent in desperate levity. He enjoyed a vindictive pleasure in outraging the opinions of a society which he despised. He became careless of those decencies which were expected from a man so highly distinguished in the literary and political world. The sarcastic bitterness of his conversation disgusted those who were more inclined to accuse his licentiousness than their own degeneracy, and who were unable to conceive the strength of those emotions which are concealed by the jests of the wretched and by the follies of the wise.

The historical works of Machiavelli still remain to be considered. The life of Castruccio Castracani will occupy us for a very short time, and would scarcely have demanded our notice, had it not attracted a much greater share of public attention than it deserves. Few books, indeed, could be more interesting than a careful and judicious account, from such a pen, of the illustrious Prince of Lucca, the most eminent of those Italian chiefs, who, like Pisistratus and Gelon, acquired a power felt rather than seen, and resting, not on law or on prescription, but on the public favour and on their great personal qualities. Such a work would exhibit to us the real nature of that species of sovereignty, so singular and so often misunderstood, which the Greeks denominated *tyranny*, and which modified in some degree by the feudal system, reappeared in the commonwealths of Lombardy and Tuscany. But this little composition of Machiavelli is in no sense a history. It has

no pretensions to fidelity. It is a trifle, and not a very successful trifle. It is scarcely more authentic than the novel of Belphegor, and is very much duller.

The last great work of this illustrious man was the history of his native city. It was written by the command of the Pope, who, as chief of the house of Medici, was at that time sovereign of Florence. The characters of Cosmo, of Piero, and of Lorenzo, are, however, treated with a freedom and impartiality equally honourable to the writer and to the patron. The miseries and humiliations of dependence, the bread which is more bitter than every other food, the stairs which are more painful than every other ascent* had not broken the spirit of Machiavelli. The most corrupting post in a corrupting profession had not depraved the generous heart of Clement.

The history does not appear to be the fruit of much industry or research. It is unquestionably inaccurate. But it is elegant, lively, and picturesque, beyond any other in the Italian language. The reader, we believe, carries away from it a more vivid and a more faithful impression of the national character and manners, than from more correct accounts. The truth is, that the book belongs rather to ancient than to modern literature. It is in the style, not of Davila and Clarendon, but of Herodotus and Tacitus; and the classical histories may almost be called romances founded in fact. The relation is, no doubt, in all its principal points, strictly true. But the numerous little incidents which heighten the interest, the words, the gestures, the looks, are evidently furnished by the imagination of the author. The fashion of later times is different. A more exact narrative is given by the writer. It may be doubted whether more exact notions are conveyed to the reader. The best portraits are those in which there is a slight mixture of caricature; and we are not aware that the best histories are not those in which a little of the exaggeration of fictitious narrative is judiciously employed. Something is lost in accuracy; but much is gained in effect. The fainter lines are neglected; but the great characteristic features are imprinted on the mind for ever.

* Dante Paradiso, canto xvii.

The history terminates with the death of Lorenzo de Medici. Machiavelli had, it seems, intended to continue it to a later period. But his death prevented the execution of his design; and the melancholy task of recording the desolation and shame of Italy devolved on Guicciardini.

Machiavelli lived long enough to see the commencement of the last struggle for Florentine liberty. Soon after his death, monarchy was finally established—not such a monarchy as that of which Cosmo had laid the foundations deep in the constitution and feelings of his countrymen, and which Lorenzo had embellished with the trophies of every science and every art; but a loathsome tyranny, proud and mean, cruel and feeble, bigoted and lascivious. The character of Machiavelli was hateful to the new masters of Italy; and those parts of his theory which were in strict accordance with their own daily practice, afforded a pretext for blackening his memory. His works were misrepresented by the learned, misconstrued by the ignorant, censured by the church, abused, with all the rancour of simulated virtue, by the minions of a base despotism, and the priests of a baser superstition. The name of the man whose genius had illuminated all the dark places of policy, and to whose patriotic wisdom an oppressed people had owed their last chance of emancipation and revenge, passed into a proverb of infamy.

For more than two hundred years his bones lay undistinguished. At length, an English nobleman paid the last honours to the greatest statesman of Florence. In the church of Santa Croce, a monument was erected to his memory, which is contemplated with reverence by all who can distinguish the virtues of a great mind through the corruptions of a degenerate age; and which will be approached with still deeper homage, when the object to which his public life was devoted shall be attained, when the foreign yoke shall be broken, when a second Proccita shall avenge the wrongs of Naples, when a happier Rienzi shall restore the good estate of Rome, when the streets of Florence and Bologna shall again resound with their ancient war cry—*Popolo; popolo; muoiano i tiranni!*

Dryden.*

[*Edinburgh Review.*]

The public voice has assigned to Dryden the first place in the second rank of our poets—no mean station in a table of intellectual precedency so rich in illustrious names. It is allowed that, even of the few who were his superiors in genius, none has exercised a more extensive or permanent influence on the national habits of thought and expression. His life was commensurate with the period during which a great revolution in the public taste was effected; and in that revolution he played the part of Cromwell. By unscrupulously taking the lead in its wildest excesses, he obtained the absolute guidance of it. By trampling on laws, he acquired the authority of a legislator. By signalizing himself as the most daring and irreverent of rebels, he raised himself to the dignity of a recognised prince. He commenced his career by the most frantic outrages. He terminated it in the repose of established sovereignty—the author of a new code, the root of a new dynasty.

Of Dryden, however, as of almost every man who has been distinguished either in the literary or in the political world, it may be said that the course which he pursued, and the effect which he produced, depended less on his personal qualities than on the circumstances in which he was placed. Those who have read history with discrimination know the fallacy of those panegyrics and invectives, which represent individuals as effecting great moral and intellectual revolutions, subverting established systems, and imprinting a new character on their age. The difference between one

* *The Poetical Works of* John Dryden. In two volumes. University Edition. London, 1826.

man and another is by no means so great as the superstitious crowd supposes. But the same feelings which, in ancient Rome, produced the apotheosis of a popular emperor, and, in modern Rome, the canonization of a devout prelate, lead men to cherish an illusion which furnishes them with something to adore. By a law of association, from the operation of which even minds the most strictly regulated by reason are not wholly exempt, misery disposes us to hatred, and happiness to love, although there may be no person to whom our misery or our happiness can be ascribed. The peevishness of an invalid vents itself even on those who alleviate his pain. The good-humour of a man elated by success often displays itself towards enemies. In the same manner, the feelings of pleasure and admiration, to which the contemplation of great events gives birth, make an object where they do not find it. Thus, nations descend to the absurdities of Egyptian idolatry, and worship stocks and reptiles—Sacheverells and Wilkeses. They even fall prostrate before a deity to which they have themselves given the form which commands their veneration, and which, unless fashioned by them, would have remained a shapeless block. They persuade themselves that they are the creatures of what they have themselves created. For, in fact, it is the age that forms the man, not the man that forms the age. Great minds do indeed react on the society which has made them what they are; but they only pay with interest what they have received. We extol Bacon, and sneer at Aquinas. But if their situations had been changed, Bacon might have been the Angelical Doctor, the most subtle Aristotelian of the schools; the Dominican might have led forth the sciences from their house of bondage. If Luther had been born in the tenth century, he would have effected no reformation. If he had never been born at all, it is evident that the sixteenth century could not have elapsed without a great schism in the church. Voltaire, in the days of Lewis the Fourteenth, would probably have been, like most of the literary men of that time, a zealous Jansenist, eminent among the defenders of efficacious grace, a bitter assailant of the lax morality of the Jesuits and the unreasonable decisions of the Sorbonne. If Pascal had entered on his literary career when intelligence was more general, and

abuses at the same time more flagrant, when the church was polluted by the Iscariot Dubois, the court disgraced by the orgies of Canillac, and the nation sacrificed to the juggles of Law; if he had lived to see a dynasty of harlots, an empty treasury and a crowded harem, an army formidable only to those whom it should have protected, a priesthood just religious enough to be intolerant, he might possibly, like every man of genius in France, have imbibed extravagant prejudices against monarchy and Christianity. The wit which blasted the sophisms of Escobar, the impassioned eloquence which defended the sisters of Port Royal, the intellectual hardihood which was not beaten down even by Papal authority, might have raised him to the Patriarchate of the Philosophical Church. It was long disputed whether the honour of inventing the method of Fluxions belonged to Newton or to Leibnitz. It is now generally allowed that these great men made the same discovery at the same time. Mathematical science, indeed, had then reached such a point, that if neither of them had ever existed, the principle must inevitably have occurred to some person within a few years. So in our own time, the doctrine of rent now universally received by political economists, was propounded almost at the same moment, by two writers unconnected with each other. Preceding speculators had long been blundering round about it; and it could not possibly have been missed much longer by the most heedless inquirer. We are inclined to think that, with respect to every great addition which has been made to the stock of human knowledge, the case has been similar; that without Copernicus we should have been Copernicans, that without Columbus America would have been discovered, that without Locke we should have possessed a just theory of the origin of human ideas. Society indeed has its great men and its little men, as the earth has its mountains and its valleys. But the inequalities of intellect, like the inequalities of the surface of our globe, bear so small a proportion to the mass, that, in calculating its great revolutions, they may safely be neglected. The sun illuminates the hills, while it is still below the horizon; and truth is discovered by the highest minds a little before it becomes manifest to the multitude. This is the extent of their superiority. They are the first to catch and reflect a

light, which, without their assistance, must, in a short time, be visible to those who lie far beneath them.

The same remark will apply equally to the fine arts. The laws on which depend the progress and decline of poetry, painting, and sculpture, operate with little less certainty than those which regulate the periodical returns of heat and cold, of fertility and barrenness. Those who seem to lead the public taste, are, in general, merely outrunning it in the direction which it is spontaneously pursuing. Without a just apprehension of the laws to which we have alluded, the merits and defects of Dryden can be but imperfectly understood. We will, therefore, state what we conceive them to be.

The ages in which the masterpieces of imagination have been produced, have by no means been those in which taste has been most correct. It seems that the creative faculty and the critical faculty cannot exist together in their highest perfection. The causes of this phenomenon it is not difficult to assign.

It is true that the man who is best able to take a machine to pieces, and who most clearly comprehends the manner in which all its wheels and springs conduce to its general effect, will be the man most competent to form another machine of similar power. In all the branches of physical and moral science which admit of perfect analysis, he who can resolve will be able to combine. But the analysis which criticism can effect of poetry is necessarily imperfect. One element must for ever elude its researches; and that is the very element by which poetry is poetry. In the description of nature, for example, a judicious reader will easily detect an incongruous image. But he will find it impossible to explain in what consists the art of a writer who, in a few words, brings some spot before him so vividly that he shall know it as if he had lived there from childhood; while another, employing the same materials, the same verdure, the same water, and the same flowers, committing no inaccuracy, introducing nothing which can be positively pronounced superfluous, omitting nothing which can be positively pronounced necessary, shall produce no more effect than an advertisement of a capital residence and a desirable pleasure-ground. To take another

example, the great features of the character of Hotspur are obvious to the most superficial reader. We at once perceive that his courage is splendid, his thirst of glory intense, his animal spirits high, his temper careless, arbitrary, and petulant; that he indulges his own humour without caring whose feelings he may wound, or whose enmity he may provoke by his levity. Thus far criticism will go. But something is still wanting. A man might have all those qualities, and every other quality which the most minute examiner can introduce into his catalogue of the virtues and faults of Hotspur, and yet he would not be Hotspur. Almost every thing that we have said of him applies equally to Falconbridge. Yet in the mouth of Falconbridge, most of his speeches would seem out of place. In real life, this perpetually occurs. We are sensible of wide differences between men whom, if we are required to describe them, we should describe in almost the same terms. If we were attempting to draw elaborate characters of them, we should scarcely be able to point out any strong distinction; yet we approach them with feelings altogether dissimilar. We cannot conceive of them as using the expressions or gestures of each other. Let us suppose that a zoologist should attempt to give an account of some animal, a porcupine for instance, to people who had never seen it. The porcupine, he might say, is of the genus mammalia, and the order gliris. There are whiskers on its face; it is two feet long; it has four toes before, five behind, two foreteeth, and eight grinders. Its body is covered with hair and quills. And when all this had been said, would any one of the auditors have formed a just idea of a porcupine? Would any two of them have formed the same idea? There might exist innumerable races of animals, possessing all the characteristics which have been mentioned, yet altogether unlike to each other. What the description of our naturalist is to a real porcupine, the remarks of criticism are to the images of poetry. What it so imperfectly decomposes, it cannot perfectly reconstruct. It is evidently as impossible to produce an Othello or a Macbeth by reversing an analytical process so defective, as it would be for an anatomist to form a living man out of the fragments of his dissecting-room. In both cases, the vital principle eludes the finest in-

struments, and vanishes in the very instant in which its seat is touched. Hence those who, trusting to their critical skill, attempt to write poems, give us, not images of things, but catalogues of qualities. Their characters are allegories; not good men and bad men, but cardinal virtues and deadly sins. We seem to have fallen among the acquaintances of our old friend Christian: sometimes we meet Mistrust and Timorous: sometimes Mr. Hate-good and Mr. Love-lust; and then again Prudence, Piety, and Charity.

That critical discernment is not sufficient to make men poets, is generally allowed. Why it should keep them from becoming poets, is not perhaps equally evident. But the fact is, that poetry requires not an examining, but a believing frame of mind. Those feel it most, and write it best, who forget that it is a work of art; to whom its imitations, like the realities from which they are taken, are subjects, not for connoisseurship, but for tears and laughter, resentment and affection; who are too much under the influence of the illusion to admire the genius which has produced it; who are too much frightened for Ulysses in the cave of Polyphemus to care whether the pun about Outis be good or bad; who forget that such a person as Shakspeare ever existed, while they weep and curse with Lear. It is by giving faith to the creations of the imagination that a man becomes a poet. It is by treating those creations as deceptions, and by resolving them, as nearly as possible, into their elements, that he becomes a critic. In the moment in which the skill of the artist is perceived, the spell of the art is broken.

These considerations account for the absurdities into which the greatest writers have fallen, when they have attempted to give general rules for composition, or to pronounce judgment on the works of others. They are unaccustomed to analyze what they feel; they therefore perpetually refer their emotions to causes which have not in the slightest degree tended to produce them. They feel pleasure in reading a book. They never consider that this pleasure may be the effect of ideas, which some unmeaning expression, striking on the first link of a chain of associations, may have called up in their own minds—that they have themselves furnished to the author the beauties which they admire.

Cervantes is the delight of all classes of readers. Every schoolboy thumbs to pieces the most wretched translations of his romance, and knows the lantern jaws of the knight-errant, and the broad cheeks of the squire, as well as the faces of his own playfellows. The most experienced and fastidious judges are amazed at the perfection of that art which extracts inextinguishable laughter from the greatest of human calamities, without once violating the reverence due to it; at that discriminating delicacy of touch, which makes a character exquisitively ridiculous without impairing its worth, its grace, or its dignity. In Don Quixote are several dissertations on the principles of poetic and dramatic writing. No passages in the whole work exhibit stronger marks of labour and attention; and no passages in any work with which we are acquainted are more worthless and puerile. In our time they would scarcely obtain admittance into the literary department of the Morning Post. Every reader of the Divine Comedy must be struck by the veneration which Dante expresses for writers far inferior to himself. He will not lift up his eyes from the ground in the presence of Brunetto, all whose works are not worth the worst of his own hundred cantos. He does not venture to walk in the same line with the bombastic Statius. His admiration of Virgil is absolute idolatry. If indeed it had been excited by the elegant, splendid, and harmonious diction of the Roman poet, it would not have been altogether unreasonable; but it is rather as an authority on all points of philosophy, than as a work of imagination, that he values the Æneid. The most trivial passages he regards as oracles of the highest authority and of the most recondite meaning. He describes his conductor as the sea of all wisdom, the sun which heals every disordered sight. As he judged of Virgil, the Italians of the fourteenth century judged of him; they were proud of him; they praised him; they struck medals bearing his head; they quarrelled for the honour of possessing his remains; they maintained professors to expound his writings. But what they admired was not that mighty imagination which called a new world into existence, and made all its sights and sounds familiar to the eye and ear of the mind. They said little of those awful and lovely creations on which later critics

delight to dwell—Farinata lifting his haughty and tranquil brow from his couch of everlasting fire—the lion-like repose of Sordello—or the light which shone from the celestial smile of Beatrice. They extolled their great poet for his smattering of ancient literature and history; for his logic and his divinity; for his absurd physics, and his more absurd metaphysics; for every thing but that in which he pre-eminently excelled. Like the fool in the story, who ruined his dwelling by digging for gold, which, as he had dreamed, was concealed under its foundations, they laid waste one of the noblest works of human genius, by seeking in it for buried treasures of wisdom, which existed only in their own wild reveries. The finest passages were little valued till they had been debased into some monstrous allegory. Louder applause was given to the lecture on fate and free-will, or to the ridiculous astronomical theories, than to those tremendous lines which disclose the secrets of the tower of hunger; or to that half-told tale of guilty love, so passionate and so full of tears.

We do not mean to say that the contemporaries of Dante read, with less emotion than their descendants, of Ugolino groping among the wasted corpses of his children, or of Francesca startling at the tremendous kiss, and dropping the fatal volume. Far from it. We believe that they admired these things less than ourselves, but that they felt them more. We should, perhaps, say, that they felt them too much to admire them. The progress of a nation from barbarism to civilization produces a change similar to that which takes place during the progress of an individual from infancy to mature age. What man does not remember with regret the first time that he read Robinson Crusoe? Then, indeed, he was unable to appreciate the powers of the writer; or rather, he neither knew nor cared whether the book had a writer at all. He probably thought it not half so fine as some rant of Macpherson about dark-browed Foldath and white-bosomed Strinadona. He now values Fingal and Temora only as showing with how little evidence a story may be believed, and with how little merit a book may be popular. Of the romance of Defoe, he entertains the highest opinion. He perceives the hand of a master in ten thousand touches, which formerly he passed by with-

out notice. But though he understands the merits of the narrative better than formerly, he is far less interested by it. Xury, and Friday, and pretty Poll, the boat with the shoulder-of-mutton sail, and the canoe which could not be brought down to the water's edge, the tent with its hedge and ladders, the preserve of kids, and the den where the old goat died, can never again be to him the realities which they were.

The days when his favourite volume set him upon making wheel-barrows and chairs, upon digging caves and fencing huts in the garden, can never return. Such is the law of our nature. Our judgment ripens, our imagination decays. We cannot at once enjoy the flowers of the spring of life and the fruits of its autumn, the pleasures of close investigation and those of agreeable error. We cannot sit at once in the front of the stage and behind the scenes. We cannot be under the illusion of the spectacle, while we are watching the movements of the ropes and pulleys which dispose it.

The chapter in which Fielding describes the behaviour of Partridge at the theatre, affords so complete an illustration of our proposition, that we cannot refrain from quoting some parts of it.

"Partridge gave that credit to Mr. Garrick which he had denied to Jones, and fell into so violent a trembling that his knees knocked against each other. Jones asked him what was the matter, and whether he was afraid of the warrior upon the stage?—'O, la, sir,' said he, 'I perceive now it is what you told me. I am not afraid of any thing, for I know it is but a play; and if it was really a ghost, it could do one no harm at such a distance and in so much company; and yet, if I was frightened, I am not the only person.'—'Why, who,' cries Jones, 'dost thou take to be such a coward here, besides thyself?'—'Nay, you may call me a coward if you will; but, if that little man there upon the stage is not frightened, I never saw any man frightened in my life.' . . . He sat with his eyes fixed, partly on the Ghost and partly on Hamlet, and with his mouth open; the same passions which succeeded each other in Hamlet, succeeded likewise in him.

"Little more worth remembering occurred during the

play, at the end of which Jones asked him which of the players he liked best. To this, he answered, with some appearance of indignation at the question, 'The King, without doubt.'—'Indeed, Mr. Partridge,' says Mrs. Miller, 'you are not of the same opinion with the town; for they are all agreed that Hamlet is acted by the best player who was ever on the stage.'—'He the best player!' cries Partridge, with a contemptuous sneer; 'why, I could act as well as he myself. I am sure, if I had seen a ghost, I should have looked in the very same manner, and done just as he did. And then, to be sure, in that scene, as you called it, between him and his mother, where you told me he acted so fine, why, any man, that is, any good man, that had such a mother, would have done exactly the same. I know you are only joking with me; but, indeed, madam, though I never was at a play in London, yet I have seen acting before in the country, and the King for my money; he speaks all his words distinctly, and half as loud again as the other. Anybody may see he is an actor.'"

In this excellent passage, Partridge is represented as a very bad theatrical critic. But none of those who laugh at him possess the tithe of his sensibility to theatrical excellence. He admires in the wrong place; but he trembles in the right place. It is, indeed, because he is so much excited by the acting of Garrick, that he ranks him below the strutting, mouthing, performer, who personates the King. So, we have heard it said, that in some parts of Spain and Portugal, an actor who should represent a depraved character finely, instead of calling down the applauses of the audience, is hissed and pelted without mercy. It would be the same in England, if we, for one moment, thought that Shylock or Iago was standing before us. While the dramatic art was in its infancy at Athens, it produced similar effects on the ardent and imaginative spectators. It is said that they blamed Eschylus for frightening them into fits with his Furies. Herodotus tells us, that when Phrynichus produced his tragedy on the fall of Miletus, they fined him in a penalty of a thousand drachms, for torturing their feelings by so pathetic an exhibition. They did not regard him as a great artist, but merely as a man who had given them pain. When they woke from the distressing illusion,

they treated the author of it as they would have treated a messenger who should have brought them fatal and alarming tidings which turned out to be false. In the same manner, a child screams with terror at the sight of a person in an ugly mask. He has, perhaps, seen the mask put on. But his imagination is too strong for his reason, and he entreats that it may be taken off.

We should act in the same manner, if the grief and horror produced in us by works of the imagination amounted to real torture. But in us, these emotions are comparatively languid. They rarely affect our appetite or our sleep. They leave us sufficiently at ease to trace them to their causes, and to estimate the powers which produce them. Our attention is speedily diverted from the images which call forth our tears, to the art by which those images have been selected and combined. We applaud the genius of the writer. We applaud our own sagacity and sensibility, and we are comforted.

Yet, though we think that, in the progress of nations towards refinement, the reasoning powers are improved at the expense of the imagination, we acknowledge that to this rule there are many apparent exceptions. We are not, however, quite satisfied that they are more than apparent. Men reasoned better, for example, in the time of Elizabeth than in the time of Egbert; and they also wrote better poetry. But we must distinguish between poetry as a mental act, and poetry as a species of composition. If we take it in the latter sense, its excellence depends, not solely on the vigour of the imagination, but partly also on the instruments which the imagination employs. Within certain limits, therefore, poetry may be improving, while the poetical faculty is decaying. The vividness of the picture presented to the reader is not, necessarily, proportioned to the vividness of the prototype which exists in the mind of the writer. In the other arts, we see this clearly. Should a man, gifted by nature with all the genius of Canova, attempt to carve a statue without instruction as to the management of his chisel, or attention to the anatomy of the human body, he would produce something compared with which the Highlander at the door of the snuff-shop would deserve admiration. If an uninitiated Raphael were to attempt a painting, it would be

a mere daub; indeed, the connoisseurs say, that the early works of Raphael are little better. Yet, who can attribute this to want of imagination? Who can doubt that the youth of that great artist was passed amidst an ideal world of beautiful and majestic forms? Or, who will attribute the difference which appears between his first rude essays, and his magnificent Transfiguration, to a change in the constitution of his mind? In poetry, as in painting and sculpture, it is necessary that the imitator should be well acquainted with that which he undertakes to imitate, and expert in the mechanical part of his art. Genius will not furnish him with a vocabulary: it will not teach him what word most exactly corresponds to his idea and will most fully convey it to others: it will not make him a great descriptive poet, till he has looked with attention on the face of nature; or a great dramatist, till he has felt and witnessed much of the influence of the passions. Information and experience are, therefore, necessary; not for the purpose of strengthening the imagination, which is never so strong as in people incapable of reasoning—savages, children, madmen, and dreamers; but for the purpose of enabling the artist to communicate his conceptions to others.

In a barbarous age the imagination exercises a despotic power. So strong is the perception of what is unreal, that it often overpowers all the passions of the mind, and all the sensations of the body. At first, indeed, the phantasm remains undivulged, a hidden treasure, a worldless poetry, an invisible painting, a silent music, a dream of which the pains and pleasures exist to the dreamer alone, a bitterness which the heart only knoweth, a joy with which a stranger intermeddleth not. The machinery by which ideas are to be conveyed from one person to another, is as yet rude and defective. Between mind and mind there is a great gulf. The imitative arts do not exist, or are in their lowest state. But the actions of men amply prove that the faculty which gives birth to those arts is morbidly active. It is not yet the inspiration of poets and sculptors; but it is the amusement of the day, the terror of the night, the fertile source of wild superstitions. It turns the clouds into gigantic shapes, and the winds into doleful voices. The belief which springs from it is more absolute and undoubting than any which can

be derived from evidence. It resembles the faith which we repose in our own sensations. Thus, the Arab, when covered with wounds, saw nothing but the dark eyes and the green kerchief of a beckoning Houri. The Northern warrior laughed in the pangs of death, when he thought of the mead of Valhalla.

The first works of the imagination are, as we have said, poor and rude, not from the want of genius, but from the want of materials. Phidias could have done nothing with an old tree and a fish-bone, or Homer with the language of New Holland.

Yet the effect of these early performances, imperfect as they must necessarily be, is immense. All deficiencies are to be supplied by the susceptibility of those to whom they are addressed. We all know what pleasure a wooden doll, which may be bought for sixpence, will afford to a little girl. She will require no other company. She will nurse it, dress it, and talk to it all day. No grown-up man takes half so much delight in one of the incomparable babies of Chantrey. In the same manner, savages are more affected by the rude compositions of their bards than nations more advanced in civilization by the greatest masterpieces of poetry.

In process of time, the instruments by which the imagination works are brought to perfection. Men have not more imagination than their rude ancestors. We strongly suspect that they have much less. But they produce better works of imagination. Thus, up to a certain period, the diminution of the poetical powers is far more than compensated by the improvement of all the appliances and means of which those powers stand in need. Then comes the short period of splendid and consummate excellence. And then, from causes against which it is vain to struggle, poetry begins to decline. The progress of language, which was at first favourable, becomes fatal to it, and, instead of compensating for the decay of the imagination, accelerates that decay, and renders it more obvious. When the adventurer in the Arabian tale anointed one of his eyes with the contents of the magical box, all the riches of the earth, however widely dispersed, however sacredly concealed, became visible to him. But when he tried the experiment on both eyes, he was struck with blindness. What the enchanted elixir was to the sight of

the body, language is to the sight of the imagination. At first it calls up a world of glorious illusions, but when it becomes too copious, it altogether destroys the visual power.

As the development of the mind proceeds, symbols, instead of being employed to convey images, are substituted for them. Civilized men think as they trade, not in kind, but by means of a circulating medium. In these circumstances the sciences improve rapidly, and criticism among the rest; but poetry, in the highest sense of the word, disappears. Then comes the dotage of the fine arts, a second childhood, as feeble as the former, and far more hopeless. This is the age of critical poetry, of poetry by courtesy, of poetry to which the memory, the judgment, and the wit contribute far more than the imagination. We readily allow that many works of this description are excellent; we will not contend with those who think them more valuable than the great poems of an earlier period. We only maintain that they belong to a different species of composition, and are produced by a different faculty.

It is some consolation to reflect that this critical school of poetry improves as the science of criticism improves; and that the science of criticism, like every other science, is constantly tending towards perfection. As experiments are multiplied, principles are better understood.

In some countries, in our own, for example, there has been an interval between the downfall of the creative school and the rise of the critical, a period during which imagination has been in its decrepitude, and taste in its infancy. Such a revolutionary interregnum as this, will be deformed by every species of extravagance.

The first victory of good taste is over the bombast and conceits which deform such times as these. But criticism is still in a very imperfect state. What is accidental is for a long time confounded with what is essential. General theories are drawn from detached facts. How many hours the action of a play may be allowed to occupy—how many similes an epic poet may introduce into his first book, —whether a piece, which is acknowledged to have a beginning and end, may not be without a middle, and other questions as puerile as these, formerly occupied the attention of men in letters in France, and even in this country.

Poets, in such circumstances as these, exhibit all the narrowness and feebleness of the criticism by which their manner has been fashioned. From outrageous absurdity they are preserved indeed by their timidity. But they perpetually sacrifice nature and reason to arbitrary canons of taste. In their eagerness to avoid the *mala prohibita* of a foolish code, they are perpetually rushing on the *mala in se*. Their great predecessors, it is true, were as bad critics as themselves, or perhaps worse; but those predecessors, as we have attempted to show, were inspired by a faculty independent of criticism, and therefore wrote well while they judged ill.

In time, men begin to take more rational and comprehensive views of literature. The analysis of poetry, which, as we have remarked, must at best be imperfect, approaches nearer and nearer to exactness. The merits of the wonderful models of former times are justly appreciated. The frigid productions of a later age are rated at no more than their proper value. Pleasing and ingenious imitations of the manner of the great masters appear. Poetry has a partial revival, a St. Martin's summer, which, after a period of dreariness and decay, agreeably reminds us of the splendour of its June. A second harvest is gathered in; though, growing on a spent soil, it has not the heart of the former. Thus, in the present age, Monti has successfully imitated the style of Dante; and something of the Elizabethan inspiration has been caught by several eminent countrymen of our own. But never will Italy produce another Inferno, or England another Hamlet. We look on the beauties of the modern imitations with feelings similar to those with which we see flowers disposed in vases to ornament the drawing-rooms of a capital. We doubtless regard them with pleasure, with greater pleasure, perhaps, because, in the midst of a place ungenial to them, they remind us of the distant spots on which they flourish in spontaneous exuberance. But we miss the sap, the freshness, and the bloom. Or, if we may borrow another illustration from Queen Scheherezade, we would compare the writers of this school to the jewellers who were employed to complete the unfinished window of the palace of Aladdin. Whatever skill or cost could do was done. Palace and bazaar were ransacked for precious stones.

Yet the artists, with all their dexterity, with all their assiduity, and with all their vast means, were unable to produce any thing comparable to the wonders which a spirit of a higher order had wrought in a single night.

The history of every literature with which we are acquainted confirms, we think, the principles which we have laid down. In Greece we see the imaginative school of poetry gradually fading into the critical. Æschylus and Pindar were succeeded by Sophocles; Sophocles by Euripides; Euripides by the Alexandrian versifiers. Of these last, Theocritus alone has left compositions which deserve to be read. The splendid and grotesque fairy-land of the Old Comedy, rich with such gorgeous hues, peopled with such fantastic shapes, and vocal alternately with the sweetest peals of music and the loudest bursts of elvish laughter, disappeared for ever. The masterpieces of the New Comedy are known to us by Latin translations of extraordinary merit. From these translations, and from the expressions of the ancient critics, it is clear that the original compositions were distinguished by grace and sweetness, that they sparkled with wit and abounded with pleasing sentiments, but that the creative power was gone. Julius Cæsar called Terence a half Menander—a sure proof that Menander was not a quarter Aristophanes.

The literature of the Romans was merely a continuation of the literature of the Greeks. The pupils started from the point at which their masters had in the course of many generations arrived. They thus almost wholly missed the period of original invention. The only Latin poets whose writings exhibit much vigour of imagination are Lucretius and Catullus. The Augustan age produced nothing equal to their finer passages.

In France, that licensed jester, whose jingling cap and motley coat concealed more genius than ever mustered in the saloon of Ninon or of Madame Géoffrin, was succeeded by writers as decorous and as tiresome as gentlemen-ushers.

The poetry of Italy and of Spain has undergone the same change. But nowhere has the revolution been more complete and violent than in England. The same person who, when a boy, had clapped his thrilling hands at the first representation of the Tempest, might, without attaining to

a marvellous longevity, have lived to read the earlier works of Prior and Addison. The change, we believe, must, sooner or later, have taken place. But its progress was accelerated, and its character modified, by the political occurrences of the times, and particularly by two events, the closing of the theatres under the Commonwealth, and the restoration of the house of Stuart.

We have said that the critical and poetical faculties are not only distinct, but almost incompatible. The state of our literature during the reigns of Elizabeth and James the First is a strong confirmation of this remark. The greatest works of imagination that the world has ever seen were produced at that period. The national taste, in the mean time, was to the last degree detestable. Alliterations, puns, antithetical forms of expression lavishly employed where no corresponding opposition existed between the thoughts expressed, strained allegories, pedantic allusions, every thing, in short, quaint and affected in matter and manner, made up what was then considered as fine writing. The eloquence of the bar, the pulpit, and the council-board was deformed by conceits which would have disgraced the rhyming shepherds of an Italian academy. The king quibbled on the throne. We might, indeed, console ourselves by reflecting that his majesty was a fool. But the chancellor quibbled in concert from the woolsack, and the chancellor was Francis Bacon. It is needless to mention Sydney and the whole tribe of Euphuists. For Shakspeare himself, the greatest poet that ever lived, falls into the same fault whenever he means to be particularly fine. While he abandons himself to the impulse of his imagination, his compositions are not only the sweetest and the most sublime, but also the most faultless that the world has ever seen. But as soon as his critical powers come into play, he sinks to the level of Cowley, or rather he does ill what Cowley did well. All that is bad in his works is bad elaborately, and of malice aforethought. The only thing wanting to make them perfect was, that he should never have troubled himself with thinking whether they were good or not. Like the angels in Milton, he sinks "with compulsion and laborious flight." His natural tendency is upwards. That he may soar, it is only necessary that he should not struggle to fall. He resembled

the American cacique, who, possessing in unmeasured abundance the metals which in polished societies are esteemed the most precious, was utterly unconscious of their value, and gave up treasures more valuable than the imperial crowns of other countries, to secure some gaudy and far-fetched but worthless bauble, a plated button, or a necklace of coloured glass.

We have attempted to show that, as knowledge is extended, and as the reason developes itself, the imitative arts decay. We should, therefore, expect that the corruption of poetry would commence in the educated classes of society. And this, in fact, is almost constantly the case. The few great works of imagination which appear in a critical age are, almost without exception, the works of uneducated men. Thus, at a time when persons of quality translated French romances, and when the universities celebrated royal deaths in verses about Tritons and Fauns, a preaching tinker produced the Pilgrim's Progress. And thus a ploughman startled a generation, which had thought Hayley and Beattie great poets, with the adventures of Tam O'Shanter. Even in the latter part of the reign of Elizabeth, the fashionable poetry had degenerated. It retained few vestiges of the imagination of earlier times. It had not yet been subjected to the rules of good taste. Affectation had completely tainted madrigals and sonnets. The grotesque conceits and the tuneless numbers of Donne were, in the time of James, the favourite models of composition at Whitehall and at the Temple. But though the literature of the court was in its decay, the literature of the people was in its perfection. The Muses had taken sanctuary in the theatres, the haunts of a class whose taste was not better than that of the right honourables and singular good lords who admired metaphysical love-verses, but whose imagination retained all its freshness and vigour; whose censure and approbation might be erroneously bestowed, but whose tears and laughter were never in the wrong. The infection which had tainted lyric and didactic poetry had but slightly and partially touched the drama. While the noble and the learned were comparing eyes to burning-glasses, and tears to terrestrial globes, coyness to an enthymeme, absence to a pair of compasses, and an unrequited passion to the fortieth remainderman in

an entail, Juliet leaning from the balcony, and Miranda smiling over the chess-board, sent home many spectators, as kind and simple-hearted as the master and mistress of Fletcher's Ralpho, to cry themselves to sleep.

No species of fiction is so delightful to us as the old English drama. Even its inferior productions possess a charm not to be found in any other kind of poetry. It is the most lucid mirror that ever was held up to nature. The creations of the great dramatists of Athens produce the effect of magnificent sculptures, conceived by a mighty imagination, polished with the utmost delicacy, imbodying ideas of ineffable majesty and beauty, but cold, pale, and rigid, with no bloom on the cheek, and no speculation in the eye. In all the draperies, the figures and the faces, in the lovers and the tyrants, the Bacchanals and the Furies, there is the same marble chillness and deadness. Most of the characters of the French stage resemble the waxen gentlemen and ladies in the window of a perfumer, rouged, curled, and bedizened, but fixed in such stiff attitudes, and staring with eyes expressive of such utter unmeaningness, that they cannot produce an illusion for a single moment. In the English plays alone is to be found the warmth, the mellowness, and the reality of painting. We know the minds of the men and women, as we know the faces of the men and women of Vandyke.

The excellence of these works is in a great measure the result of two peculiarities, which the critics of the French school consider as defects—from the mixture of tragedy and comedy, and from the length and extent of the action. The former is necessary to render the drama a just representation of a world, in which the laughers and the weepers are perpetually jostling each other—in which every event has its serious and its ludicrous side. The latter enables us to form an intimate acquaintance with characters, with which we could not possibly become familiar during the few hours to which the unities restrict the poet. In this respect the works of Shakspeare, in particular, are miracles of art. In a piece, which may be read aloud in three hours, we see a character gradually unfold all its recesses to us. We see it change with the change of circumstances. The petulant youth rises into the politic and warlike sovereign. The profuse and courteous philanthropist sours into a hater and

scorner of his kind. The tyrant is altered, by the chastening of affliction, into a pensive moralist. The veteran general, distinguished by coolness, sagacity, and self-command, sinks under a conflict between love, strong as death, and jealousy, cruel as the grave. The brave and loyal subject passes, step by step, to the extremities of human depravity. We trace his progress from the first dawnings of unlawful ambition, to the cynical melancholy of his impenitent remorse. Yet, in these pieces, there are no unnatural transitions. Nothing is omitted: nothing is crowded. Great as are the changes, narrow as is the compass within which they are exhibited, they shock us as little as the gradual alterations of those familiar faces which we see every evening and every morning. The magical skill of the poet resembles that of the Dervise in the Spectator, who condensed all the events of seven years into the single moment during which the king held his head under the water.

It is deserving of remark, that at the time of which we speak, the plays even of men not eminently distinguished by genius—such, for example, as Jonson—were far superior to the best works of imagination in other departments. Therefore, though we conceive that, from causes which we have already investigated, our poetry must necessarily have declined, we think that, unless its fate had been accelerated by external attacks, it might have enjoyed an euthanasia—that genius might have been kept alive by the drama till its place could, in some degree, be supplied by taste—that there would have been scarcely any interval between the age of sublime invention and that of agreeable imitation. The works of Shakspeare, which were not appreciated with any degree of justice before the middle of the eighteenth century, might then have been the recognised standards of excellence during the latter part of the seventeenth; and he and the great Elizabethan writers might have been almost immediately succeeded by a generation of poets, similar to those who adorn our own times.

But the Puritans drove imagination from its last asylum. They prohibited theatrical representations, and stigmatized the whole race of dramatists as enemies of morality and religion. Much that is objectionable may be found in the

writers whom they reprobated; but whether they took the best measures for stopping the evil, appears to us very doubtful, and must, we think, have appeared doubtful to themselves, when, after the lapse of a few years, they saw the unclean spirit whom they had cast out, return to his old haunts with seven others fouler than himself.

By the extinction of the drama, the fashionable school of poetry—a school without truth of sentiment or harmony of versification—without the powers of an earlier or the correctness of a later age—was left to enjoy undisputed ascendency. A viscious ingenuity, a morbid quickness to perceive resemblances and analogies between things apparently heterogeneous, constituted almost its only claim to admiration. Suckling was dead. Milton was absorbed in political and theological controversy. If Waller differed from the Cowleian sect of writers, he differed for the worse. He had as little poetry as they, and much less wit: nor is the languor of his verses less offensive than the ruggedness of theirs. In Denham alone the faint dawn of a better manner was discernible.

But, low as was the state of our poetry during the civil war and the Protectorate, a still deeper fall was at hand. Hitherto our literature had been idiomatic. In mind, as in situation, we had been islanders. The revolutions in our taste, like the revolutions in our government, had been settled without the interference of strangers. Had this state of things continued, the same just principles of reasoning, which, about this time, were applied with unprecedented success to every part of philosophy, would soon have conducted our ancestors to a sounder code of criticism. There were already strong signs of improvement. Our prose had at length worked itself clear from those quaint conceits which still deformed almost every metrical composition. The parliamentary debates, and the diplomatic correspondence of that eventful period, had contributed much to this reform. In such bustling times, it was absolutely necessary to speak and write to the purpose. The absurdities of Puritanism had, perhaps, done more. At the time when that odious style, which deforms the writings of Hall and of Lord Bacon, was almost universal, had appeared that stupendous work, the English Bible—a book which, if

every thing else in our language should perish, would alone suffice to show the whole extent of its beauty and power. The respect which the translators felt for the original prevented them from adding any of the hideous decorations then in fashion. The groundwork of the version, indeed, was of an earlier age. The familiarity with which the Puritans, on almost every occasion, used the scriptural phrases, was, no doubt, very ridiculous; but it produced good effects. It was a cant; but it drove out a cant far more offensive.

The highest kind of poetry is, in a great measure, independent of those circumstances which regulate the style of composition in prose. But with that inferior species of poetry which succeeds to it, the case is widely different. In a few years, the good sense and good taste which had weeded out affectation from moral and political treatises would, in the natural course of things, have effected a similar reform in the sonnet and the ode. The rigour of the victorious sectaries had relaxed. A dominant religion is never ascetic. The government connived at theatrical representations. The influence of Shakspeare was once more felt. But darker days were approaching. A foreign yoke was to be imposed on our literature. Charles, surrounded by the companions of his long exile, returned to govern a nation which ought never to have cast him out, or never to have received him back. Every year which he had passed among strangers had rendered him more unfit to rule his countrymen. In France, he had seen the refractory magistracy humbled, and royal prerogative, though exercised by a foreign priest in the name of a child, victorious over all opposition. This spectacle naturally gratified a prince to whose family the opposition of parliaments had been so fatal. Politeness was his solitary good quality. The insults which he had suffered in Scotland had taught him to prize it. The effeminacy and apathy of his disposition fitted him to excel in it. The elegance and vivacity of the French manners fascinated him. With the political maxims and the social habits of his favourite people, he adopted their taste in composition; and, when seated on the throne, soon rendered it fashionable, partly by direct patronage, but still more by that contemptible policy which, for a time, made England the last of the nations, and raised Louis the Fourteenth to a height

of power and fame, such as no French sovereign had ever before attained.

It was to please Charles that rhyme was first introduced into our plays. Thus, a rising blow, which would at any time have been mortal, was dealt to the English drama, then just recovering from its languishing condition. Two detestable manners, the indigenous and the imported, were now in a state of alternate conflict and amalgamation. The bombastic meanness of the new style was blended with the ingenious absurdity of the old; and the mixture produced something which the world had never before seen, and which, we hope, it will never see again—something, by the side of which the worst nonsense of all other ages appears to advantage—something, which those who have attempted to caricature it, have, against their will, been forced to flatter—of which the tragedy of Bayes is a very favourable specimen. What Lord Dorset observed to Edward Howard, might have been addressed to almost all his contemporaries:—

> "As skilful divers to the bottom fall,
> Swifter than those who cannot swim at all;
> So, in this way of writing without thinking,
> Thou hast a strange alacrity in sinking."

From this reproach, some clever men of the world must be excepted, and among them Dorset himself. Though by no means great poets, or even good versifiers, they always wrote with meaning, and sometimes with wit. Nothing indeed more strongly shows to what a miserable state literature had fallen, than the immense superiority which the occasional rhymes, carelessly thrown on paper by men of this class, possess over the elaborate productions of almost all the professed authors. The reigning taste was so bad, that the success of a writer was in inverse proportion to his labour, and to his desire of excellence. An exception must be made for Butler, who had as much wit and learning as Cowley, and who knew, what Cowley never knew, how to use them. A great command of good homely English distinguishes him still more from the other writers of the time. As for Gondibert, those may criticise it who can read it. Imagination was extinct. Taste was depraved. Poetry, driven from palaces, colleges, and theatres, had

found an asylum in the obscure dwelling, where a great man, born out of due season, in disgrace, penury, pain, and blindness, still kept uncontaminated a character and a genius worthy of a better age.

Every thing about Milton is wonderful; but nothing is so wonderful as that, in an age so unfavourable to poetry, he should have produced the greatest of modern epic poems. We are not sure that this is not in some degree to be attributed to his want of sight. The imagination is notoriously most active when the external world is shut out. In sleep its illusions are perfect. They produce all the effect of realities. In darkness its visions are always more distinct than in the light. Every person who amuses himself with what is called building castles in the air, must have experienced this. We know artists, who, before they attempt to draw a face from memory, close their eyes, that they may recall a more perfect image of the features and the expression. We are therefore inclined to believe, that the genius of Milton may have been preserved from the influence of times so unfavourable to it, by his infirmity. Be this as it may, his works at first enjoyed a very small share of popularity. To be neglected by his contemporaries was the penalty which he paid for surpassing them. His great poem was not generally studied or admired, till writers, far inferior to him, had, by obsequiously cringing to the public taste, acquired sufficient favour to reform it.

Of these, Dryden was the most eminent. Amidst the crowd of authors, who, during the earlier years of Charles the Second, courted notoriety by every species of absurdity and affectation, he speedily became conspicuous. No man exercised so much influence on the age. The reason is obvious. On no man did the age exercise so much influence. He was, perhaps, the greatest of those whom we have designated as the critical poets; and his literary career exhibited, on a reduced scale, the whole history of the school to which he belonged, the rudeness and extravagance of its infancy, the propriety, the grace, the dignified good sense, the temperate splendour of its maturity. His imagination was torpid, till it was awakened by his judgment. He began with quaint parallels and empty mouthing. He gradually acquired the energy of the satirist, the gravity of the moral-

ist, the rapture of the lyric poet. The revolution through which English literature has been passing, from the time of Cowley to that of Scott, may be seen in miniature within the compass of his volumes.

His life divides itself into two parts. There is some debatable ground on the common frontier; but the line may be drawn with tolerable accuracy. The year 1678 is that on which we should be inclined to fix as the date of a great change in his manner. During the preceding period appeared some of his courtly panegyrics—his Annus Mirabilis, and most of his plays; indeed, all his rhyming tragedies. To the subsequent period belong his best dramas—All for Love, The Spanish Friar, and Sebastian—his satires, his translations, his didactic poems, his fables, and his odes.

Of the small pieces which were presented to chancellors and princes, it would scarcely be fair to speak. The greatest advantage which the fine arts derive from the extension of knowledge is, that the patronage of individuals becomes unnecessary. Some writers still affect to regret the age of patronage. None but bad writers have reason to regret it. It is always an age of general ignorance. Where ten thousand readers are eager for the appearance of a book, a small contribution from each makes up a splendid remuneration for the author. Where literature is a luxury, confined to few, each of them must pay high. If the Empress Catharine, for example, wanted an epic poem, she must have wholly supported the poet;—just as, in a remote country village, a man who wants a mutton-chop is sometimes forced to take the whole sheep;—a thing which never happens where the demand is large. But men who pay largely for the gratification of their taste, will expect to have it united with some gratification to their vanity. Flattery is carried to a shameless extent; and the habit of flattery almost inevitably introduces a false taste into composition. Its language is made up of hyperbolical commonplaces—offensive from their triteness—and still more offensive from their extravagance. In no school is the trick of overstepping the modesty of nature so speedily acquired. The writer, accustomed to find exaggeration acceptable and necessary on one subject, uses it on all. It is not strange, therefore, that the early

panegyrical verses of Dryden should be made up of meanness and bombast. They abound with the conceits which his immediate predecessors had brought into fashion. But his language and his versification were already far superior to theirs.

The Annus Mirabilis shows great command of expression, and a fine ear for heroic rhyme. Here its merits end. Not only has it no claim to be called poetry; but it seems to be the work of a man who could never, by any possibility, write poetry. Its affected similes are the best part of it. Gaudy weeds present a more encouraging spectacle than utter barrenness. There is scarcely a single stanza in this long work, to which the imagination seems to have contributed any thing. It is produced, not by creation, but by construction. It is made up, not of pictures, but of inferences. We will give a single instance, and certainly a favourable instance—a quatrain which Johnson has praised. Dryden is describing the sea-fight with the Dutch.

> "Amidst whole heaps of spices lights a ball;
> And now their odours armed against them fly,
> Some preciously by shattered porcelain fall,
> And some by aromatic splinters die."

The poet should place his readers, as nearly as possible, in the situation of the sufferers or the spectators. His narration ought to produce feelings similar to those which would be excited by the event itself. Is this the case here? Who, in a sea-fight, ever thought of the price of the china which beats out the brains of a sailor; or of the odour of the splinter which shatters his leg? It is not by an act of the imagination, at once calling up the scene before the interior eye, but by painful meditation—by turning the subject round and round—by tracing out facts into remote consequences, that these incongruous topics are introduced into the description. Homer, it is true, perpetually uses epithets which are not peculiarly appropriate. Achilles is the swift-footed, when he is sitting still. Ulysses is the much-enduring, when he has nothing to endure. Every spear casts a long shadow; every ox has crooked horns; and every woman a high bosom, though these particulars may be quite beside the purpose. In our old ballads, a similar practice

prevails. The gold is always red, and the ladies always gay, though nothing whatever may depend on the hue of gold, or the temper of the ladies. But these adjectives are mere customary additions. They merge in the substantives to which they are attached. If they at all colour the idea, it is with a tinge so slight, as in no respect to alter the general effect. In the passage which we have quoted from Dryden, the case is very different. *Preciously* and *aromatic* divert our whole attention to themselves, and dissolve the image of the battle in a moment. The whole poem reminds us of Lucan, and of the worst parts of Lucan, the sea-fight in the bay of Marseilles, for example. The description of the two fleets during the night is perhaps the only passage which ought to be exempted from this censure. If it was from the Annus Mirabilis that Milton formed his opinion, when he pronounced Dryden a good rhymer, but no poet, he certainly judged correctly. But Dryden was, as we have said, one of those writers, in whom the period of imagination does not precede, but follow, the period of observation and reflection.

His plays, his rhyming plays in particular, are admirable subjects for those who wish to study the morbid anatomy of the drama. He was utterly destitute of the power of exhibiting real human beings. Even in the far inferior talent of composing characters out of those elements into which the imperfect process of our reason can resolve them, he was very deficient. His men are not even good personifications; they are not well-assorted assemblages of qualities. Now and then, indeed, he seizes a very coarse and marked distinction; and gives up, not a likeness, but a strong caricature, in which a single peculiarity is protruded, and every thing else neglected; like the Marquis of Granby at an inn door, whom we know by nothing but his baldness; or Wilkes, who is Wilkes only in his squint. These are the best specimens of his skill. For most of his pictures seem, like Turkey carpets, to have been expressly designed not to resemble any thing in the heavens above, in the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth.

The latter manner he practises most frequently in his tragedies, the former in his comedies. The comic characters are, without mixture, loathsome and despicable. The

men of Etherege and Vanbrugh are bad enough; those of Smollet are perhaps worse. But they do not approach to the Celadons, the Wildbloods, the Woodalls, and the Rhodophils of Dryden. The vices of these last are set off by a certain fierce, hard impudence, to which we know nothing comparable. Their love is the appetite of beasts, their friendship the confederacy of knaves. The ladies seem to have been expressly created to form helps meet for such gentlemen. In deceiving and insulting their old fathers, they do not perhaps exceed the license which, by immemorial prescription, has been allowed to heroines. But they also cheat at cards, rob strong boxes, put up their favours to auction, betray their friends, abuse their rivals in a style of Billingsgate, and invite their lovers in the language of the Piazza. These, it must be remembered, are not the valets and waiting-women, the Mascarilles and Nerines, but the recognised heroes and heroines, who appear as the representatives of good society, and who, at the end of the fifth act, marry and live very happily ever after. The sensuality, baseness, and malice of their natures are unredeemed by any quality of a different description, by any touch of kindness, or even by an honest burst of hearty hatred and revenge. We are in a world where there is no humanity, no veracity, no sense of shame—a world for which any good-natured man would gladly take in exchange the society of Milton's devils. But as soon as we enter the regions of Tragedy, we find a great change; there is no lack of the fine sentiment there. Metastasio is surpassed in his own department. Scuderi is out-scuderied. We are introduced to people whose proceedings we can trace to no motive—of whose feelings we can form no more idea than of a sixth sense. We have left a race of creatures, whose love is as delicate and affectionate as the passion which an alderman feels for a turtle. We find ourselves among beings, whose love is purely disinterested emotion—a loyalty extending to passive obedience—a religion like that of the Quietists, unsupported by any sanction of hope or fear. We see nothing but despotism without power, and sacrifices without compensation.

We will give a few instances:—In Aurengzebe, Arimant, governor of Agra, falls in love with his prisoner Indamora. She rejects his suit with scorn, but assures him that she

shall make great use of her power over him. He threatens to be angry. She answers, very coolly:

> "Do not: your anger, like your love, is vain:
> Whene'er I please, you must be pleased again.
> Knowing what power I have your will to bend,
> I'll use it; for I need just such a friend."

This is no idle menace. She soon brings a letter addressed to his rival, orders him to read it, asks him whether he thinks it sufficiently tender, and finally commands him to carry it himself. Such tyranny as this, it may be thought, would justify resistance. Arimant does indeed venture to remonstrate:

> "This fatal paper rather let me tear,
> Than, like Bellerophon, my sentence bear."

The answer of the lady is incomparable:

> "You may; but 'twill not be your best advice;
> 'Twill only give me pains of writing twice.
> You know you must obey me soon or late;
> Why should you vainly struggle with your fate?"

Poor Arimant seems to be of the same opinion. He mutters something about fate and free-will, and walks off with the billet-doux.

In the Indian Emperor, Montezuma presents Almeria with a garland as a token of his love, and offers to make her his queen. She replies:

> "I take this garland, not as given by you;
> But as my merit's and my beauty's due;
> As for the crown which you, my slave, possess,
> To share it with you would but make me less."

In return for such proofs of tenderness as these, her admirer consents to murder his two sons, and a benefactor, to whom he feels the warmest gratitude. Lyndaraxa, in the Conquest of Granada, assumes the same lofty tone with Abdelmelech. He complains that she smiles upon his rival.

"*Lynd.* And when did I my power so far resign,
That you should regulate each look of mine.
Abdel. Then, when you gave your love, you gave that power.
Lynd. 'Twas during pleasure—'tis revoked this hour.
Abdel. I'll hate you, and this visit is my last.
Lynd. Do, if you can; you know I hold you fast."

That these passages violate all historical propriety—that sentiments to which nothing similar was ever even affected, except by the cavaliers of Europe, are transferred to Mexico and Agra, is a light accusation. We have no objection to a conventional world, an Illyrian puritan, or a Bohemian seaport. While the faces are good, we care little about the background. Sir Joshua Reynolds says, that the curtains and hangings in an historical painting ought to be, not velvet or cotton, but merely drapery. The same principle should be applied to poetry and romance. The truth of character is the first object; the truth of place and time is to be considered only in the second place. Puff himself could tell the actor to turn out his toes, and remind him that Keeper Hatton was a great dancer. We wish that, in our own time, a writer of a very different order from Puff had not too often forgotten human nature in the niceties of upholstery, millinery, and cookery.

We blame Dryden, not because the persons of his dramas are not Moors or Americans, but because they are not men and women; not because love, such as he represents it, could not exist in a harem or in a wigwam, but because it could not exist anywhere. As is the love of his heroes, such are all their other emotions. All their qualities, their courage, their generosity, their pride, are on the same colossal scale. Justice and prudence are virtues which can exist only in a moderate degree, and which change their nature and their name if pushed to excess. Of justice and prudence, therefore, Dryden leaves his favourites destitute. He did not care to give them what he could not give without measure. The tyrants and ruffians are merely the heroes altered by a few touches, similar to those which transformed the honest face of Sir Roger de Coverley into the Saracen's head. Through the grin and frown, the original features are still perceptible.

It is in the tragicomedies that these absurdities strike us

most. The two races of men, or rather the angels and the baboons, are there presented to us together. We meet in one scene with nothing but gross, selfish, unblushing, lying libertines of both sexes, who, as a punishment, we suppose, for their depravity, are condemned to talk nothing but prose. But as soon as we meet with people who speak in verse, we know that we are in society which would have enraptured the Cathos and Madelon of Molière, in society for which Oroondates would have too little of the lover, Clelia too much of the coquette.

As Dryden was unable to render his plays interesting by means of that which is the peculiar and appropriate excellence of the drama, it was necessary that he should find some substitute for it. In his comedies he supplied its place, sometimes by wit, but more frequently by intrigue, by disguises, mistakes of persons, dialogues at cross purposes, hairbreadth escapes, perplexing concealments, and surprising disclosures. He thus succeeded at least in making these pieces very amusing.

In his tragedies he trusted, and not altogether without reason, to his diction and his versification. It was on this account, in all probability, that he so eagerly adopted and so reluctantly abandoned the practice of rhyming in his plays. What is unnatural appears less unnatural in that species of verse, than in lines which approach more nearly to common conversation; and in the management of the heroic couplet, Dryden has never been equalled. It is unnecessary to urge any arguments against a fashion now universally condemned. But it is worthy of observation, that though Dryden was deficient in that talent which blank verse exhibits to the greatest advantage, and was certainly the best writer of heroic rhyme in our language, yet the plays which have, from the time of their first appearance, been considered as his best, are in blank verse. No experiment can be more decisive.

It must be allowed, that the worst even of the rhyming tragedies contains good description and magnificent rhetoric. But even when we forget that they are plays, and, passing by their dramatic improprieties, consider them with reference to the language, we are perpetually disgusted by passages which it is difficult to conceive how any author

could have written or any audience have tolerated; rants in which the raving violence of the manner forms a strange contrast with the abject tameness of the thought. The author laid the whole fault on the audience, and declared, that when he wrote them, he considered them bad enough to please. This defence is unworthy of a man of genius, and, after all, is no defence. Otway pleased without rant; and so might Dryden have done, if he had possessed the powers of Otway. The fact is, that he had a tendency to bombast, which, though subsequently corrected by time and thought, was never wholly removed, and which showed itself in performances not designed to please the rude mob of the theatre.

Some indulgent critics have represented this failing as an indication of genius, as the profusion of unlimited wealth, the wantonness of exuberant vigour. To us it seems to bear a nearer affinity to the tawdriness of poverty, or the spasms and convulsions of weakness. Dryden surely had not more imagination than Homer, Dante, or Milton, who never fall into this vice. The swelling diction of Æschylus and Isaiah resembles that of Almanzor and Maximin no more than the tumidity of a muscle resembles the tumidity of a boil. The former is symptomatic of health and strength, the latter of debility and disease. If ever Shakspeare rants, it is not when his imagination is hurrying him along, but when he is hurrying his imagination along—when his mind is for a moment jaded—when, as was said of Euripides, he resembles a lion, who excites his own fury by lashing himself with his tail. What happened to Shakspeare from the occasional suspension of his powers, happened to Dryden from constant impotence. He, like his confederate Lee, had judgment enough to appreciate the great poets of the preceding age, but not judgment enough to shun competition with them. He felt and admired their wild and daring sublimity. That it belonged to another age than that in which he lived, and required other talents than those which he possessed; that, in aspiring to emulate it, he was wasting, in a hopeless attempt, powers which might render him pre-eminent in a different career, was a lesson which he did not learn till late. As those knavish enthusiasts, the French prophets, courted inspiration, by mimicking the writhings, swoonings, and

gaspings, which they considered as its symptoms, he attempted, by affected fits of poetical fury, to bring on a real paroxysm; and, like them, he got nothing but his distortions for his pains.

Horace very happily compares those who, in his time, imitated Pindar, to the youth who attempted to fly to heaven on waxen wings, and who experienced so fatal and ignominious a fall. His own admirable good sense preserved him from this error, and taught him to cultivate a style in which excellence was within his reach. Dryden had not the same self-knowledge. He saw that the greatest poets were never so successful as when they rushed beyond the ordinary bounds, and that some inexplicable good fortune preserved them from tripping, even when they staggered on the brink of nonsense. He did not perceive that they were guided and sustained by a power denied to himself. They wrote from the dictation of the imagination, and they found a response in the imaginations of others. He, on the contrary, sat down to work himself, by reflection and argument, into a deliberate wildness, a rational frenzy.

In looking over the admirable designs which accompany the Faust, we have always been much struck by one which represents the wizard and the tempter riding at full speed. The demon sits on his furious horse as heedlessly as if he were reposing on a chair. That he should keep his saddle in such a posture, would seem impossible to any who did not know that he was secure in the privileges of a superhuman nature. The attitude of Faust, on the contrary, is the perfection of horsemanship. Poets of the first order might safely write as desperately as Mephistopheles rode. But Dryden, though admitted to communion with higher spirits, though armed with a portion of their power, and intrusted with some of their secrets, was of another race. What they might securely venture to do, it was madness in him to attempt. It was necessary that taste and critical science should supply its deficiencies.

We will give a few examples. Nothing can be finer than the description of Hector at the Grecian wall.

ο δ' αρ' εσθορε φαιδιμος Εκτωρ,
Νυκτι θοη αταλαντος υπωπια· λαμπε δε χαλκω

Σμερδαλεω, τον εστο περι χροι· δοια δε χερσιν
Δουρ' εχεν ουκ αν τις μιν ερυκακοι αντιβολησας,
Νοσφι θεων, οτ' εσαλτο πυλας· πυρι δ' ωσσε δεδηει
Αυτικα δ' οι μεν τειχος υπερβασαν, οι δε κατ' αυτας·
Ποιητας εσεχυντο πυλας. Δαναοι δ' εφοβηθεν
Νηας ανα γλαφυρας· ομαδος δ' αλιαστος ετυχθη.

What daring expressions! Yet how significant! How picturesque! Hector seems to rise up in his strength and fury. The gloom of night in his frown—the fire burning in his eyes—the javelins and the blazing armour—the mighty rush through the gates and down the battlements—the trampling and the infinite roar of the multitude—every thing is with us; every thing is real.

Dryden has described a very similar event in Maximin, and has done his best to be sublime, as follows:

"There with a forest of their darts he strove,
And stood like Capaneus defying Jove;
With his broad sword the boldest beating down,
Till Fate grew pale, lest he should win the town,
And turned the iron leaves of its dark book
To make new dooms, or mend what it mistook."

How exquisite is the imagery of the fairy songs in the Tempest and the Midsummer Night's Dream; Ariel riding through the twilight on the bat, or sucking in the bells of flowers with the bee; or the little bower-women of Titania, driving the spiders from the couch of the Queen! Dryden truly said, that

"Shakspeare's magic could not copied be;
Within the circle none durst walk but he."

It would have been well if he had not himself dared to step within the enchanted line, and drawn on himself a fate similar to that which, according to the old superstition, punished such presumptuous interferences. The following lines are parts of the song of his fairies:

"Merry, merry, merry, we sail from the East,
Half-tippled at a rainbow feast.
In the bright moonshine, while winds whistle loud,
Tivy, tivy, tivy, we mount and we fly,
All racking along in a downy white cloud;

> And lest our leap from the sky prove too far,
> We slide on the back of a new falling star,
> And drop from above
> In a jelly of love."

These are very favourable instances. Those who wish for a bad one may read the dying speeches of Maximin, and may compare them with the last scenes of Othello and Lear.

If Dryden had died before the expiration of the first of the periods into which we have divided his literary life, he would have left a reputation, at best, little higher than that of Lee or Davenant. He would have been known only to men of letters; and by them he would have been mentioned as a writer who threw away, on subjects which he was incompetent to treat, powers which, judiciously employed, might have raised him to eminence; whose diction and whose numbers had sometimes very high merit, but all whose works were blemished by a false taste and by errors of gross negligence. A few of his prologues and epilogues might perhaps have still been remembered and quoted. In these little pieces, he early showed all the powers which afterwards rendered him the greatest of modern satirists. But during the latter part of his life, he gradually abandoned the drama. His plays appeared at longer intervals. He renounced rhyme in tragedy. His language became less turgid, his characters less exaggerated. He did not indeed produce correct representations of human nature; but he ceased to daub such monstrous chimeras as those which abound in his earlier pieces. Here and there passages occur worthy of the best ages of the British stage. The style which the drama requires, changes with every change of character and situation. He who can vary his manner to suit the variation, is the great dramatist; but he who excels in one manner only, will, when that manner happens to be appropriate, appear to be a great dramatist; as the hands of a watch, which does not go, point right once in the twelve hours. Sometimes there is a scene of solemn debate. This a mere rhetorician may write as well as the greatest tragedian that ever lived. We confess that to us the speech of Sempronius in Cato seems very nearly as good as Shakspeare could have made it. But when the senate breaks up, and we find that the lovers and their mistresses, the hero,

the villain, and the deputy villain, all continue to harangue in the same style, we perceive the difference between a man who can write a play and a man who can write a speech. In the same manner, wit, a talent for description, or a talent for narration, may, for a time, pass for dramatic genius. Dryden was an incomparable reasoner in verse. He was conscious of his power; he was proud of it; and the authors of the Rehearsal justly charged him with abusing it. His warriors and princesses are fond of discussing points of amorous casuistry, such as would have delighted a Parliament of Love. They frequently go still deeper, and speculate on philosophical necessity and the origin of evil.

There were, however, some occasions which absolutely required this peculiar talent. Then Dryden was indeed at home. All his best scenes are of this description. They are all between men; for the heroes of Dryden, like many other gentlemen, can never talk sense when ladies are in company. They are all intended to exhibit the empire of reason over violent passion. We have two interlocutors, the one eager and impassioned, the other high, cool, and judicious. The composed and rational character gradually acquires the ascendency. His fierce companion is first inflamed to rage by his reproaches, then overawed by his equanimity, convinced by his arguments, and soothed by his persuasions. This is the case in the scene between Hector and Troilus, in that between Antony and Ventidius, and in that between Sebastian and Dorax. Nothing of the same kind in Shakspeare is equal to them, except the quarrel between Brutus and Cassius, which is worth them all three.

Some years before his death, Dryden altogether ceased to write for the stage. He had turned his powers in a new direction, with success the most splendid and decisive. His taste had gradually awakened his creative faculties. The first rank in poetry was beyond his reach, but he challenged and secured the most honourable place in the second. His imagination resembled the wings of an ostrich. It enabled him to run, though not to soar. When he attempted the highest flights, he became ridiculous; but while he remained in a lower region, he outstripped all competitors.

All his natural and all his acquired powers fitted him to found a good critical school of poetry. Indeed, he carried

his reforms too far for his age. After his death, our literature retrograded; and a century was necessary to bring it back to the point at which he left it. The general soundness and healthfulness of his mental constitution; his information, of vast superficies though of small volume; his wit, scarcely inferior to that of the most distinguished followers of Donne; his eloquence, grave, deliberate, and commanding, could not save him from disgraceful failure as a rival of Shakspeare, but raised him far above the level of Boileau. His command of language was immense. With him died the secret of the old poetical diction of England—the art of producing rich effects by familiar words. In the following century, it was as completely lost as the Gothic method of painting glass, and was but poorly supplied by the laborious and tesselated imitations of Mason and Gray. On the other hand, he was the first writer under whose skilful management the scientific vocabulary fell into natural and pleasing verse. In this department, he succeeded as completely as his contemporary Gibbons succeeded in the similar enterprise of carving the most delicate flowers from heart of oak. The toughest and most knotty parts of language became ductile at his touch. His versification, in the same manner, while it gave the first model of that neatness and precision which the following generation esteemed so highly, exhibited, at the same time, the last examples of nobleness, freedom, variety of pause and cadence. His tragedies in rhyme, however worthless in themselves, had at least served the purpose of nonsense-verses: they had taught him all the arts of melody which the heroic couplet admits. For bombast, his prevailing vice, his new subjects gave little opportunity: his better taste gradually discarded it.

He possessed, as we have said, in a pre-eminent degree, the power of reasoning in verse; and this power was now peculiarly useful to him. His logic is by no means uniformly sound. On points of criticism, he always reasons ingeniously; and when he is disposed to be honest, correctly. But the theological and political questions, which he undertook to treat in verse, were precisely those which he understood least. His arguments, therefore, are often worthless. But the manner in which they are stated is beyond all praise. The style is transparent. The topics follow each other in

the happiest order. The objections are drawn up in such a manner, that the whole fire of the reply may be brought to bear on them. The circumlocutions which are substituted for technical phrases, are clear neat, and exact. The illustrations at once adorn and elucidate the reasoning. The sparkling epigrams of Cowley, and the simple garrulity of the burlesque poets of Italy, are alternately employed, in the happiest manner, to give effect to what is obvious, or clearness to what is obscure.

His literary creed was catholic, even to latitudinarianism; not from any want of acuteness, but from a disposition to be easily satisfied. He was quick to discern the smallest glimpse of merit; he was indulgent even to gross improprieties, when accompanied by any redeeming talent. When he said a severe thing, it was to serve a temporary purpose,—to support an argument, or to tease a rival. Never was so able a critic so free from fastidiousness. He loved the old poets, especially Shakspeare. He admired the ingenuity which Donne and Cowley had so wildly abused. He did justice, amidst the general silence, to the memory of Milton. He praised to the skies the schoolboy lines of Addison. Always looking on the fair side of every object, he admired extravagance on account of the invention which he supposed it to indicate; he excused affectation in favour of wit; he tolerated even tameness for the sake of the correctness which was its concomitant.

It was probably to this turn of mind, rather than to the more disgraceful causes which Johnson had assigned, that we are to attribute the exaggeration which disfigures the panegyrics of Dryden. No writer, it must be owned, has carried the flattery of dedication to a greater length. But this was not, we suspect, merely interested servility; it was the overflowing of a mind singularly disposed to admiration, —of a mind which diminished vices, and magnified virtues and obligations. The most adulatory of his addresses is that in which he dedicates the State of Innocence to Mary of Modena. Johnson thinks it strange that any man should use such language without self-detestation. But he has not remarked, that to the very same work is prefixed an eulogium on Milton, which certainly could not have been acceptable at the court of Charles the Second. Many years later,

when Whig principles were in a great measure triumphant, Sprat refused to admit a monument of John Philips into Westminister Abbey, because, in the epitaph, the name of Milton incidentally occurred. The walls of his church, he declared, should not be polluted by the name of a republican! Dryden was attached, both by principle and interest to the court. But nothing could deaden his sensibility to excellence. We are unwilling to accuse him severely, because the same disposition, which prompted him to pay so generous a tribute to the memory of a poet whom his patrons detested, hurried him into extravagance when he described a princess, distinguished by the splendour of her beauty and the graciousness of her manners.

This is an amiable temper; but it is not the temper of great men. Where there is elevation of character, there will be fastidiousness. It is only in novels and on tombstones, that we meet with people who are indulgent to the faults of others and unmerciful to their own; and Dryden, at all events, was not one of these paragons. His charity was extended most liberally to others, but it certainly began at home. In taste he was by no means deficient. His critical works are, beyond all comparison, superior to any which had, till then, appeared in England. They were generally intended as apologies for his own poems, rather than as expositions of general principles; he therefore often attempts to deceive the reader by sophistry which could scarcely have deceived himself. His dicta are the dicta, not of a judge, but of an advocate; often of an advocate in an unsound cause. Yet, in the very act of misrepresenting the laws of composition, he shows how well he understands them. But he was perpetually acting against his better knowledge. His sins were sins against light. He trusted that what was bad would be pardoned for the sake of what was good. What was good, he took no pains to make better He was not, like most persons who rise to eminence, dissatisfied even with his best productions. He had set up no unattainable standard of perfection, the contemplation of which might at once improve and mortify him. His path was not attended by an unapproachable mirage of excellence, for ever receding and for ever pursued. He was not disgusted by the negligence of others, and he extended the

same toleration to himself. His mind was of a slovenly character—fond of splendour, but indifferent to neatness. Hence most of his writings exhibit the sluttish magnificence of a Russian noble, all vermin and diamonds, dirty linen and inestimable sables. Those faults which spring from affectation, time and thought in a great measure removed from his poems. But his carelessness he retained to the last. If towards the close of his life he less frequently went wrong from negligence, it was only because long habits of composition rendered it more easy to go right. In his best pieces, we find false rhymes—triplets, in which the third line appears to be a mere intruder, and, while it breaks the music, adds nothing to the meaning—gigantic Alexandrines of fourteen and sixteen syllables, and truncated verses for which he never troubled himself to find a termination or a partner.

Such are the beauties and the faults which may be found in profusion throughout the later works of Dryden. A more just and complete estimate of his natural and acquired powers, of the merits of his style and of its blemishes, may be formed from the Hind and Panther, than from any of his other writings. As a didatic poem, it is far superior to the Religio Laici. The satirical parts, particularly the character of Burnet, are scarcely inferior to the best passages in Absalom and Achitophel. There are, moreover, occasional touches of a tenderness which affects us more, because it is decent, rational, and manly, and reminds us of the best scenes in his tragedies. His versification sinks and swells in happy unison with the subject; and his wealth of language seems to be unlimited. Yet the carelessness with which he has constructed his plot, and the innumerable inconsistencies into which he is every moment falling, detract much from the pleasure which such varied excellence affords.

In Absalom and Achitophel he hit upon a new and rich vein, which he worked with signal success. The ancient satirists were the subjects of a despotic government. They were compelled to abstain from political topics, and to confine their attention to the frailties of private life. They might, indeed, sometimes venture to take liberties with public men,

"Quorum Flaminia tegitur cinis atque Latina."

Thus Juvenal immortalized the obsequious senators, who met to decide the fate of the memorable turbot. His fourth satire frequently reminds us of the great political poem of Dryden; but it was not written till Domitian had fallen, and it wants something of the peculiar flavour which belongs to contemporary invective alone. His anger has stood so long, that, though the body is not impaired, the effervescence, the first cream, is gone. Boileau lay under similar restraints, and, if he had been free from all restraint, would have been no match for our countryman.

The advantages which Dryden derived from the nature of his subject, he improved to the very utmost. His manner is almost perfect. The style of Horace and Boileau is fit only for light subjects. The Frenchman did indeed attempt to turn the theological reasonings of the Provincial Letters into verse, but with very indifferent success. The glitter of Pope is cold. The ardour of Persius is without brilliancy. Magnificent versification and ingenious combinations rarely harmonize with the expression of deep feeling. In Juvenal and Dryden alone we have the sparkle and the heat together. Those great satirists succeeded in communicating the fervour of their feelings to materials the most incombustible, and kindled the whole mass into a blaze, at once dazzling and destructive. We cannot, indeed, think, without regret, of the part which so eminent a writer as Dryden took in the disputes of that period. There was, no doubt, madness and wickedness on both sides. But there was liberty on the one, and despotism on the other. On this point, however, we will not dwell. At Talavera, the English and French troops for a moment suspended their conflict, to drink of a stream which flowed between them. The shells were passed across from enemy to enemy without apprehension or molestation. We, in the same manner, would rather assist our political adversaries to drink with us of that fountain of intellectual pleasure, which should be the common refreshment of both parties, than disturb and pollute it with the havoc of unseasonable hostilities.

Macflecnoe is inferior to Absalom and Achitophel, only in the subject. In the execution it is even superior. But

the greatest work of Dryden was the last, the Ode on Saint Cecilia's day. It is the masterpiece of the second class of poetry, and ranks but just below the great models of the first. It reminds us of the Pedasus of Achilles,

ος, και Ξανθος εων, επεθ' επποις αθανατοισι.

By comparing it with the impotent ravings of the heroic tragedies, we may measure the progress which the mind of Dryden had made. He had learned to avoid a too audacious competition with higher natures, to keep at a distance from the verge of bombast or nonsense, to venture on no expression which did not convey a distinct idea to his own mind. There is none of that "darkness visible" of style which he had formerly affected, and in which the greatest poets only can succeed. Every thing is definite, significant, and picturesque. His early writings resembled the gigantic works of those Chinese gardeners who attempt to rival nature herself, to form cataracts of terrific height and sound, to raise precipitous ridges of mountains, and to imitate in artificial plantations the vastness and the gloom of some primeval forest. This manner he abandoned; nor did he ever adopt the Dutch taste which Pope affected, the trim parterres, and the rectangular walks. He rather resembled our Kents and Browns, who, imitating the great features of landscape without emulating them, consulting the genius of the place, assisting nature and carefully disguising their art, produced, not a Chamouni nor a Niagara, but a Stowe or a Hagley.

We are, on the whole, inclined to regret that Dryden did not accomplish his purpose of writing an epic poem. It certainly would not have been a work of the highest rank. It would not have rivalled the Iliad, the Odyssey, or the Paradise Lost; but it would have been superior to the productions of Apollonius, Lucan, or Statius, and not inferior to the Jerusalem Delivered. It would probably have been a vigorous narrative, animated with something of the spirit of the old romances, enriched with much splendid description, and interspersed with fine declamations and disquisitions. The danger of Dryden would have been from aiming too high; from dwelling too much, for example, on his angels of kingdoms, and attempting a competition with that great

writer, who in his own time had so incomparably succeeded in representing to us the sights and sounds of another world. To Milton, and to Milton alone belonged the secrets of the great deep, the beach of sulphur, the ocean of fire; the palaces of the fallen dominations, glimmering through the everlasting shade, the silent wilderness of verdure and fragrance where armed angels kept watch over the sleep of the first lovers, the portico of diamond, the sea of jasper, the sapphire pavement empurpled with celestial roses, and the infinite ranks of the Cherubim, blazing with adamant and gold. The council, the tournament, the procession, the crowded cathedral, the camp, the guard-room, the chaise, were the proper scenes for Dryden.

But we have not space to pass in review all the works which Dryden wrote. We, therefore, will not speculate longer on those which he might possibly have written. He may, on the whole, be pronounced to have been a man possessed of splendid talents, which he often abused, and of a sound judgment, the admonitions of which he often neglected; a man who succeeded only in an inferior department of his art, but who, in that department, succeeded pre-eminently; and who, with a more independent spirit, a more anxious desire of excellence, and more respect for himself, would, in his own walk, have attained to absolute perfection.

History.*

[*Edinburgh Review.*]

To write history respectably—that is, to abbreviate despatches, and make extracts from speeches, to intersperse in due proportion epithets of praise and abhorrence, to draw up antithetical characters of great men, setting forth how many contradictory virtues and vices they united, and abounding in *withs* and *withouts;* all this is very easy. But to be a really great historian is perhaps the rarest of intellectual distinctions. Many scientific works are, in their kind, absolutely perfect. There are poems which we should be inclined to designate as faultless, or as disfigured only by blemishes which pass unnoticed in the general blaze of excellence. There are speeches, some speeches of Demosthenes particularly, in which it would be impossible to alter a word, without altering it for the worse. But we are acquainted with no history which approaches to our notion of what a history ought to be; with no history which does not widely depart, either on the right hand or on the left, from the exact line.

The cause may easily be assigned. This province of literature is a debatable land It lies on the confines of two distinct territories. It is under the jurisdiction of two hostile powers; and, like other districts similarly situated, it is ill defined, ill cultivated, and ill regulated. Instead of being equally shared between its two rulers, the Reason and the Imagination, it falls alternately under the sole and absolute dominion of each. It is sometimes fiction. It is sometimes theory.

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* *The Romance of History. England.* By Henry Neele. London, 1828.

History, it has been said, is philosophy teaching by examples. Unhappily, what the philosophy gains in soundness and depth, the examples generally lose in vividness. A perfect historian must possess an imagination sufficiently powerful to make his narrative affecting and picturesque. Yet he must control it so absolutely as to content himself with the materials which he finds, and to refrain from supplying deficiencies by additions of his own. He must be a profound and ingenious reasoner. Yet he must possess sufficient self-command to abstain from casting his facts in the mould of his hypothesis. Those who can justly estimate these almost insuperable difficulties will not think it strange that every writer should have failed, either in the narrative or in the speculative department of history.

It may be laid down as a general rule, though subject to considerable qualifications and exceptions, that history begins in Novel and ends in Essay. Of the romantic historians, Herodotus is the earliest and the best. His animation, his simple-hearted tenderness, his wonderful talent for description and dialogue, and the pure sweet flow of his language, place him at the head of narrators. He reminds us of a delightful child. There is a grace beyond the reach of affectation in his awkwardness, a malice in his innocence, an intelligence in his nonsense, an insinuating eloquence in his lisp. We know of no writer who makes such interest for himself and his book in the heart of the reader. At the distance of three-and-twenty centuries, we feel for him the same sort of pitying fondness which Fontaine and Gay are said to have inspired in society. He has written an incomparable book. He has written something better perhaps than the best history; but he has not written a good history; he is, from the first to the last chapter, an inventor. We do not here refer merely to those gross fictions with which he has been reproached by the critics of later times. We speak of that colouring which is equally diffused over his whole narrative, and which perpetually leaves the most sagacious reader in doubt what to reject and what to receive. The most authentic parts of his work bear the same relation to his wildest legends, which Henry the Fifth bears to the Tempest. There was an expedition undertaken by Xerxes against Greece; and there was an invasion of France.

There was a battle at Platæa; and there was a battle at Agincourt. Cambridge and Exeter, the Constable and the Dauphin, were persons as real as Demaratus and Pausanias. The harangue of the archbishop on the Salic Law and the Book of Numbers differs much less from the orations which have in all ages proceeded from the right reverend bench, than the speeches of Mardonius and Artabanus, from those which were delivered at the council-board of Susa. Shakspeare gives us enumerations of armies, and returns of killed and wounded, which are not, we suspect, much less accurate than those of Herodotus. There are passages in Herodotus nearly as long as acts of Shakspeare, in which every thing is told dramatically, and in which the narrative serves only the purpose of stage-directions. It is possible, no doubt, that the substance of some real conversations may have been reported to the historian. But events which, if they ever happened, happened in ages and nations so remote that the particulars could never have been known to him, are related with the greatest minuteness of detail. We have all that Candaules said to Gyges, and all that passed between Astyages and Harpagus. We are, therefore, unable to judge whether, in the account which he gives of transactions respecting which he might possibly have been well informed, we can trust to any thing beyond the naked outline; whether, for example, the answer of Gelon to the ambassadors of the Grecian confederacy, or the expressions which passed between Aristides and Themistocles at their famous interview, have been correctly transmitted to us. The great events are, no doubt, faithfully related. So probably, are many of the slighter circumstances; but which of them, it is impossible to ascertain. The fictions are so much like the facts, and the facts so much like the fictions, that, with respect to many most interesting particulars, our belief is neither given nor withheld, but remains in an uneasy and interminable state of abeyance. We know that there is truth, but we cannot exactly decide where it lies.

The faults of Herodotus are the faults of a simple and imaginative mind. Children and servants are remarkably Herodotean in their style of narration. They tell every thing dramatically. Their *says hes* and *says shes* are proverbial. Every person who has had to settle their disputes

knows that, even when they have no intention to deceive, their reports of conversations always require to be carefully sifted. If an educated man were giving an account of the late change of administration, he would say, "Lord Goderich resigned; and the king in consequence sent for the Duke of Wellington." A porter tells the story as if he had been hid behind the curtains of the royal bed at Windsor. "So Lord Goderich says, 'I cannot manage this business; I must go out.' So the the king says, says he, 'Well, then, I must send for the Duke of Wellington, that's all.'" This is the very manner of the father of history.

Herodotus wrote as it was natural that he should write. He wrote for a nation susceptible, curious, lively, insatiably desirous of novelty and excitement; for a nation in which the fine arts had attained their highest excellence, but in which philosophy was still in its infancy. His countrymen had but recently begun to cultivate prose composition. Public transactions had generally been recorded in verse. The first historians might therefore indulge, without fear of censure, in the license allowed to their predecessors the bards. Books were few. The events of former times were learned from tradition and from popular ballads; the manners of foreign countries from the reports of travellers. It is well known that the mystery which overhangs what is distant, either in space or time, frequently prevents us from censuring as unnatural what we perceive to be impossible. We stare at a dragoon who has killed three French cuirassiers as a prodigy; yet we read, without the least disgust, how Godfrey slew his thousands, and Rinaldo his ten thousands. Within the last hundred years, stories about China and Bantam, which ought not to have imposed on an old nurse, were gravely laid down as foundations of political theories by eminent philosophers. What the time of the Crusades is to us, the generation of Crœsus and Solon was to the Greeks of the time of Herodotus. Babylon was to them what Pekin was to the French academicians of the last century.

For such a people was the book of Herodotus composed; and if we may trust to a report, not sanctioned, indeed, by writers of high authority, but in itself not improbable, it was composed not to be read, but to be heard. It was not to the slow circulation of a few copies, which the rich only could

possess, that the aspiring author looked for his reward. The great Olympian festival—the solemnity which collected multitudes, proud of the Grecian name, from the wildest mountains of Doris and the remotest colonies of Italy and Libya—was to witness his triumph. The interest of the narrative and the beauty of the style were aided by the imposing effect of recitation—by the splendour of the spectacle—by the powerful influence of sympathy. A critic who could have asked for authorities in the midst of such a scene must have been of a cold and skeptical nature, and few such critics were there. As was the historian, such were the auditors—inquisitive, credulous, easily moved by religious awe or patriotic enthusiasm. They were the very men to hear with delight of strange beasts, and birds, and trees; of dwarfs, and giants, and cannibals; of gods whose very name it was impiety to utter; of ancient dynasties which had left behind them monuments surpassing all the works of later times; of towns like provinces; of rivers like seas; of stupendous walls, and temples, and pyramids; of the rites which the Magi performed at daybreak on the tops of the mountains; of the secrets inscribed on the eternal obelisks of Memphis. With equal delight they would have listened to the graceful romances of their own country. They now heard of the exact accomplishment of obscure predictions; of the punishment of crimes over which the justice of Heaven had seemed to slumber; of dreams, omens, warnings from the dead; of princesses for whom noble suitors contended in every generous exercise of strength and skill; of infants strangely preserved from the dagger of the assassin to fulfil high destinies.

As the narrative approached their own times, the interest became still more absorbing. The chronicler had now to tell the story of that great conflict from which Europe dates its intellectual and political supremacy—a story which, even at this distance of time, is the most marvellous and the most touching in the annals of the human race—a story abounding in all that is wild and wonderful, with all that is pathetic and animating; with the gigantic caprices of infinite wealth and despotic power; with the mightier miracles of wisdom, of virtue, and of courage. He told them of rivers dried up in a day, of provinces famished for

a meal; of a passage for ships hewn through the mountains; of a road for armies spread upon the waves; of monarchies and commonwealths swept away; of anxiety, of terror, of confusion, of despair!—and then of proud and stubborn hearts tried in that extremity of evil and not found wanting; of resistance long maintained against desperate odds; of lives dearly sold when resistance could be maintained no more; of signal deliverance, and of unsparing revenge. Whatever gave a stronger air of reality to a narrative so well calculated to inflame the passions and to flatter national pride was certain to be favourably received.

Between the time at which Herodotus is said to have composed his history, and the close of the Peloponnesian war, about forty years elapsed—forty years, crowded with great military and political events. The circumstances of that period produced a great effect on the Grecian character; and nowhere was this effect so remarkable as in the illustrious democracy of Athens. An Athenian, indeed, even in the time of Herodotus, would scarcely have written a book so romantic and garrulous as that of Herodotus. As civilization advanced, the citizens of that famous republic became still less visionary, and still less simple-hearted. They aspired to know, where their ancestors had been content to doubt; they began to doubt, where their ancestors had thought it their duty to believe. Aristophanes is fond of alluding to this change in the temper of his countrymen. The father and son, in the Clouds, are evidently representatives of the generations to which they respectively belonged. Nothing more clearly illustrates the nature of this moral revolution, than the change which passed upon tragedy. The wild sublimity of Æschylus became the scoff of every young Phidippides. Lectures on abstruse points of philosophy, the fine distinctions of casuistry, and the dazzling fence of rhetoric, were substituted for poetry. The language lost something of that infantine sweetness which had characterized it. It became less like the ancient Tuscan, and more like the modern French.

The fashionable logic of the Greeks was, indeed, far from strict. Logic never can be strict where books are scarce, and where information is conveyed orally. We are all aware how frequently fallacies, which, when set down

on paper, are at once detected, pass for unanswerable arguments, when dexterously and volubly urged in parliament, at the bar, or in private conversation. The reason is evident. We cannot inspect them closely enough to perceive their inaccuracy. We cannot readily compare them with each other. We lose sight of one part of the subject, before another, which ought to be received in connection with it, comes before us; and as there is no immutable record of what has been admitted, and of what has been denied, direct contradictions pass muster with little difficulty. Almost all the education of a Greek consisted in talking and listening. His opinions on governments were picked up in the debates of the assembly. If he wished to study metaphysics, instead of shutting himself up with a book, he walked down to the market-place to look for a sophist. So completely were men formed to these habits, that even writing acquired a conversational air. The philosophers adopted the form of dialogue, as the most natural mode of communicating knowledge. Their reasonings have the merits and the defects which belong to that species of composition; and are characterized rather by quickness and subtilty than by depth and precision. Truth is exhibited in parts, and by glimpses. Innumerable clever hints are given; but no sound and durable system is erected. The *argumentum ad hominem*, a kind of argument most efficacious in debate, but utterly useless for the investigation of general principles, is among their favourite resources. Hence, though nothing can be more admirable than the skill which Socrates displays in the conversations which Plato has reported or invented, his victories, for the most part, seem to us unprofitable. A trophy is set up; but no new province is added to the dominions of the human mind.

Still, where thousands of keen and ready intellects were constantly employed in speculating on the qualities of actions, and on the principles of government, it was impossible that history should retain its old character. It became less gossiping and less picturesque; but much more accurate, and somewhat more scientific.

The history of Thucydides differs from that of Herodotus as a portrait differs from the representation of an imaginary scene; as the Burke or Fox of Reynolds differs from his

Ugolino or his Beaufort. In the former case, the archetype is given: in the latter it is created. The faculties which are required for the latter purpose are of a higher and rarer order than those which suffice for the former, and indeed necessarily comprise them. He who is able to paint what he sees with the eye of the mind, will surely be able to paint what he sees with the eye of the body. He who can invent a story and tell it well, will also be able to tell in an interesting manner a story which he has not invented. If, in practice, some of the best writers of fiction have been among the worst writers of history, it has been because one of their talents had merged in another so completely, that it could not be severed; because, having long been habituated to invent and narrate at the same time, they found it impossible to narrate without inventing.

Some capricious and discontented artists have affected to consider portrait-painting as unworthy of a man of genius. Some critics have spoken in the same contemptuous manner of history. Johnson puts the case thus:—The historian tells either what is false or what is true. In the former case he is no historian. In the latter, he has no opportunity for displaying his abilities. For truth is one: and all who tell the truth must tell it alike.

It is not difficult to elude both the horns of this dilemma. We will recur to the analogous art of portrait-painting. Any man with eyes and hands may be taught to take a likeness. The process, up to a certain point, is merely mechanical. If this were all, a man of talents might justly despise the occupation. But we could mention portraits which are resemblances, but not mere resemblances; faithful, but much more than faithful; portraits which condense into one point of time, and exhibit, at a single glance, the whole history of turbid and eventful lives—in which the eye seems to scrutinize us, and the mouth to command us—in which the brow menaces, and the lip almost quivers with scorn—in which every wrinkle is a comment on some important transaction. The account which Thucydides has given of the retreat from Syracuse is, among narratives, what Vandyck's Lord Strafford is among paintings.

Diversity, it is said, implies error; truth is one, and admits of no degree. We answer, that this principle holds

good only in abstract reasonings. When we talk of the truth of imitation in the fine arts, we mean an imperfect and a graduated truth. No picture is exactly like the original: nor is a picture good in proportion as it is like the original. When Sir Thomas Lawrence paints a handsome peeress, he does not contemplate her through a powerful microscope, and transfer to the canvas the pores of the skin, the blood-vessels of the eye, and all the other beauties which Gulliver discovered in the Brobdignaggian maids of honour. If he were to do this, the effect would not merely be unpleasant, but unless the scale of the picture were proportionably enlarged, would be absolutely *false*. And, after all, a microscope of greater power than that which he had employed, would convict him of innumerable omissions. The same may be said of history. Perfectly and absolutely true, it cannot be; for, to be perfectly and absolutely true, it ought to record *all* the slightest particulars of the slightest transactions—all the things done, and all the words uttered, during the time of which it treats. The omission of any circumstance, however insignificant, would be a defect. If history were written thus, the Bodleian library would not contain the occurrences of a week. What is told in the fullest and most accurate annals bears an infinitely small proportion to what is suppressed. The difference between the copious work of Clarendon, and the account of the civil wars in the abridgment of Goldsmith, vanishes, when compared with the immense mass of facts respecting which both are equally silent.

No picture, then, and no history, can present us with the whole truth: but those are the best pictures and the best histories which exhibit such parts of the truth as most nearly produce the effect of the whole. He who is deficient in the art of selection may, by showing nothing but the truth, produce all the effect of the grossest falsehood. It perpetually happens that one writer tells less truth than another, merely because he tells more truths. In the imitative arts we constantly see this. There are lines in the human face, and objects in landscape, which stand in such relations to each other, that they ought either to be all introduced into a painting together, or all omitted together. A sketch into which none of them enters may be excellent; but if some

are given and others left out, though there are more points of likeness, there is less likeness. An outline scrawled with a pen, which seizes the marked features of a countenance, will give a much stronger idea of it than a bad painting in oils. Yet the worst painting in oils that ever hung in Somerset House resembles the original in many more particulars. A bust of white marble may give an excellent idea of a blooming face. Colour the lips and cheeks of the bust, leaving the hair and eyes unaltered, and the similarity, instead of being more striking, will be less so.

History has its foreground and its background: and it is principally in the management of its perspective that one artist differs from another. Some events must be represented on a large scale, others diminished; the great majority will be lost in the dimness of the horizon: and a general idea of their joint effect will be given by a few slight touches.

In this respect, no writer has ever equalled Thucydides. He was a perfect master of the art of gradual diminution. His history is sometimes as concise as a chronological chart; yet it is always perspicuous. It is sometimes as minute as one of Lovelace's letters; yet it is never prolix. He never fails to contract and to expand it in the right place.

Thucydides borrowed from Herodotus the practice of putting speeches of his own into the mouths of his characters. In Herodotus, this usage is scarcely censurable. It is of a piece with his whole manner. But it is altogether incongruous in the work of his successor; and violates, not only the accuracy of history, but the decencies of fiction. When once we enter into the spirit of Herodotus, we find no inconsistency. The conventional probability of his drama is preserved from the beginning to the end. The deliberate orations and the familiar dialogues are in strict keeping with each other. But the speeches of Thucydides are neither preceded nor followed by any thing with which they harmonize. They give to the whole book something of the grotesque character of those Chinese pleasure-grounds, in which perpendicular rocks of granite start up in the midst of a soft green plain. Invention is shocking, where truth is in such close juxtaposition with it.

Thucydides honestly tells us that some of these disclosures are purely fictitious. He may have reported the substance

of others correctly. But it is clear, from the internal evidence, that he has preserved no more than the substance. His own peculiar habits of thought and expression are everywhere discernible. Individual and national peculiarities are seldom to be traced in the sentiments, and never in the diction. The oratory of the Corinthians and Thebans is not less Attic, either in matter or in manner, than that of the Athenians. The style of Cleon is as pure, as austere, as terse, and as significant as that of Pericles.

In spite of this great fault, it must be allowed that Thucydides has surpassed all his rivals in the art of historical narration, in the art of producing an effect on the imagination by skilful selection and disposition, without indulging in the license of invention. But narration, though an important part of the business of an historian, is not the whole. To append a moral to a work of fiction, is either useless or superfluous. A fiction may give a more impressive effect to what is already known, but it can teach nothing new. If it presents to us characters and trains of events to which our experience furnishes us with nothing similar, instead of deriving instruction from it, we pronounce it unnatural. We do not form our opinions from it; but we try it by our preconceived opinions. Fiction, therefore, is essentially imitative. Its merit consists in its resemblance to a model with which we are already familiar, or to which at least we can instantly refer. Hence it is, that the anecdotes, which interest us most strongly in authentic narrative, are offensive when introduced into novels; that what is called the romantic part of history is, in fact, the least romantic. It is delightful as history, because it contradicts our previous notions of human nature, and of the connection of causes and effects. It is, on that very account, shocking and incongruous in fiction. In fiction, the principles are given to find the facts; in history, the facts are given to find the principles; and the writer who does not explain the phenomena, as well as state them, performs only one-half of his office. Facts are the mere dross of history. It is from the abstract truth which interpenetrates them, and lies latent among them, like gold in the ore, that the mass derives its whole value; and the precious particles are generally combined with the baser

in such a manner that the separation is a task of the utmost difficulty.

Here Thucydides is deficient. The deficiency, indeed, is not discreditable to him. It was the inevitable effect of circumstances. It was, in the nature of things, necessary that, in some part of its progress through political science, the human mind should reach that point which it attained in his time. Knowledge advances by steps, and not by leaps. The axioms of an English debating club would have been startling and mysterious paradoxes to the most enlightened statesmen of Athens. But it would be as absurd to speak contemptuously of the Athenian on this account, as to ridicule Strabo for not having given us an account of Chili, or to talk of Ptolemy as we talk of Sir Richard Phillips. Still, when we wish for solid geographical information, we must prefer the solemn coxcombry of Pinkerton to the noble work of Strabo. If we wanted instruction respecting the solar system, we should consult the silliest girl from a boarding-school rather than Ptolemy.

Thucydides was, undoubtedly, a sagacious and reflecting man. This clearly appears from the ability with which he discusses practical questions. But the talent of deciding on the circumstances of a particular case is often possessed in the highest perfection by persons destitute of the power of generalization. Men, skilled in the military tactics of civilized nations, have been amazed at the far-sightedness and penetration which a Mohawk displays in concerting his stratagems, or in discerning those of his enemies. In England, no class possesses so much of that peculiar ability which is required for constructing ingenious schemes, and for obviating remote difficulties, as the thieves and the thief-takers. Women have more of this dexterity than men. Lawyers have more of it than statesmen: statesmen have more of it than philosophers. Monk had more of it than Harrington and all his club. Walpole had more of it than Adam Smith or Beccaria. Indeed, the species of discipline by which this dexterity is acquired tends to contract the mind, and to render it incapable of abstract reasoning.

The Grecian statesmen of the age of Thucydides were distinguished by their practical sagacity, their insight into motives, their skill in devising means for the attainment of

their ends. A state of society in which the rich were constantly planning the oppression of the poor, and the poor the spoliation of the rich, in which the ties of party had superseded those of country, in which revolutions and counter-revolutions were events of daily occurrence, was naturally prolific in desperate and crafty political adventurers. This was the very school in which men were likely to acquire the dissimulation of Mazarine, the judicious temerity of Richelieu, the penetration, the exquisite tact, the almost instinctive presentiment of approaching events, which gave so much authority to the counsel of Shaftesbury, that "it was as if a man had inquired of the oracle of God." In this school Thucydides studied; and his wisdom is that which such a school would naturally afford. He judges better of circumstances than of principles. The more a question is narrowed, the better he reasons upon it. His work suggests many most important considerations respecting the first principles of government and morals, the growth of factions, the organization of armies, and the mutual relations of communities. Yet all his general observations on these subjects are very superficial. His most judicious remarks differ from the remarks of a really philosophical historian, as a sum correctly cast up by a book-keeper, from a general expression discovered by an algebraist. The former is useful only in a single transaction; the latter may be applied to an infinite number of cases.

This opinion will, we fear, be considered as heterodox. For, not to speak of the illusion which the sight of a Greek type, or the sound of a Greek diphthong, often produces, there are some peculiarities in the manner of Thucydides, which in no small degree have tended to secure to him the reputation of profundity. His book is evidently the book of a man and a statesman; and in this respect presents a remarkable contrast to the delightful childishness of Herodotus. Throughout it there is an air of matured power, of grave and melancholy reflection, of impartiality and habitual self-command. His feelings are rarely indulged, and speedily repressed. Vulgar prejudices of every kind, and particularly vulgar superstitions, he treats with a cold and sober disdain peculiar to himself. His style is weighty, condensed, antithetical, and not unfrequently obscure. But when we

look at his political philosophy, without regard to these circumstances, we find him to have been, what indeed it would have been a miracle if he had not been, simply an Athenian of the fifth century before Christ.

Xenophon is commonly placed, but we think without much reason, in the same rank with Herodotus and Thucydides. He resembles them, indeed, in the purity and sweetness of his style; but in spirit, he rather resembles that later school of historians, whose works seem to be fables, composed for a moral, and who, in their eagerness to give us warnings and example, forget to give us men and women. The life of Cyrus, whether we look upon it as a history or as a romance, seems to us a very wretched performance. The Expedition of the Ten Thousand, and the History of Grecian Affairs, are certainly pleasant reading; but they indicate no great power of mind. In truth, Xenophon, though his taste was elegant, his disposition amiable, and his intercourse with the world extensive, had, we suspect, rather a weak head. Such was evidently the opinion of that extraordinary man to whom he early attached himself, and for whose memory he entertained an idolatrous veneration. He came in only for the milk with which Socrates nourished his babes in philosophy. A few saws of morality, and a few of the simplest doctrines of natural religion, were enough for the good young man. The strong meat, the bold speculations on physical and metaphysical science, were reserved for auditors of a different description. Even the lawless habits of a captain of mercenary troops could not change the tendency which the character of Xenophon early acquired. To the last, he seems to have retained a sort of heathen puritanism. The sentiments of piety and virtue, which abound in his works, are those of a well-meaning man, somewhat timid and narrow-minded, devout from constitution rather than from rational conviction. He was as superstitious as Herodotus, but in a way far more offensive. The very peculiarities which charm us in an infant, the toothless mumbling, the stammering, the tottering, the helplessness, the causeless tears and laughter, are disgusting in old age. In the same manner, the absurdity which precedes a period of general intelligence is often pleasing; that which follows it is contemptible. The nonsense of Hero-

dotus is that of a baby. The nonsense of Xenophon is that of a dotard. His stories about dreams, omens, and prophecies present a strange contrast to the passages in which the shrewd and incredulous Thucydides mentions the popular superstitions. It is not quite clear that Xenophon was honest in his credulity; his fanaticism was in some degree politic. He would have made an excellent member of the Apostolic Comarilla. An alarmist by nature, an aristocrat by party, he carried to an unreasonable excess his horror of popular turbulence. The quiet atrocity of Sparta did not shock him in the same manner; for he hated tumult more than crimes. He was desirous to find restraints which might curb the passions of the multitude; and he absurdly fancied that he had found them in a religion without evidences or sanction, precepts or example, in a frigid system of Theophilanthropy, supported by nursery tales.

Polybius and Arrian have given us authentic accounts of facts, and here their merit ends. They were not men of comprehensive minds: they had not the art of telling a story in an interesting manner. They have in consequence been thrown into the shade by writers, who, though less studious of truth than themselves, understood far better the art of producing effect, by Livy and Quintus Curtius.

Yet Polybius and Arrian deserve high praise, when compared with the writers of that school of which Plutarch may be considered as the head. For the historians of this class we must confess that we entertain a peculiar aversion. They seem to have been pedants, who, though destitute of those valuable qualities which are frequently found in conjunction with pedantry, thought themselves great philosophers and great politicians. They not only mislead their readers, in every page, as to particular facts, but they appear to have altogether misconceived the whole character of the times of which they write. They were inhabitants of an empire bounded by the Atlantic Ocean and the Euphrates, by the ice of Scythia and the sands of Mauritania; composed of nations whose manners, whose languages, whose religion, whose countenances and complexions were widely different, governed by one mighty despotism, which had risen on the ruins of a thousand commonwealths and kingdoms. Of liberty, such as it is in small democracies, of patriotism,

such as it is in small independent communities of any kind, they had, and they could have, no experimental knowledge. But they had read of men who exerted themselves in the cause of their country, with an energy unknown in later times, who had violated the dearest of domestic charities, or voluntarily devoted themselves to death, for the public good; and they wondered at the degeneracy of their contemporaries. It never occurred to them, that the feelings which they so greatly admired sprang from local and occasional causes; that they will always grow up spontaneously in small societies; and that, in large empires, though they may be forced into existence for a short time by peculiar circumstances, they cannot be general or permanent. It is impossible that any man should feel for a fortress on a remote frontier, as he feels for his own house; that he should grieve for a defeat in which ten thousand people whom he never saw have fallen, as he grieves for a defeat which has half unpeopled the street in which he lives; that he should leave his home for a military expedition in order to preserve the balance of power, as cheerfully as he would leave it to repel invaders who had begun to burn all the cornfields in his neighbourhood.

The writers of whom we speak should have considered this. They should have considered that, in patriotism, such as it existed among the Greeks, there was nothing essentially and eternally good; that an exclusive attachment to a particular society, though a natural, and, under certain restrictions, a most useful sentiment, implies no extraordinary attainments in wisdom or virtue; that where it has existed in an intense degree, it has turned states into gangs of robbers, whom their mutual fidelity has rendered more dangerous, has given a character of peculiar atrocity to war, and has generated that worst of all political evils, the tyranny of nations over nations.

Enthusiastically attached to the name of liberty, these historians troubled themselves little about its definition. The Spartans, tormented by ten thousand absurd restraints, unable to please themselves in the choice of their wives, their suppers, or their company, compelled to assume a peculiar manner, and to talk in a peculiar style, gloried in their liberty. The aristocracy of Rome repeatedly made liberty a plea for

cutting off the favourites of the people. In almost all the little commonwealths of antiquity, liberty was used as a pretext for measures directed against every thing which makes liberty valuable, for measures which stifled discussion, corrupted the administration of justice, and discouraged the accumulation of property. The writers, whose works we are considering, confounded the sound with the substance, and the means with the end. Their imaginations were inflamed by mystery. They conceived of liberty as monks conceive of love, as cockneys conceive of the happiness and innocence of rural life, as novel-reading sempstresses conceive of Almack's and Grosvenor Square, accomplished marquesses and handsome colonels of the Guards. In the relation of events, and the delineation of characters, they have paid little attention to facts, to the costume of the times of which they pretend to treat, or to the general principles of human nature. They have been faithful only to their own puerile and extravagant doctrines. Generals and statesmen are metamorphosed into magnanimous coxcombs, from whose fulsome virtues we turn away with disgust. The fine sayings and exploits of their heroes remind us of the insufferable perfections of Sir Charles Grandison, and affect us with a nausea similar to that which we feel when an actor, in one of Morton's or Kotzebue's plays, lays his hand on his heart, advances to the ground-lights, and mouths a moral sentence for the edification of the gods.

These writers, men who knew not what it was to have a country, men who had never enjoyed political rights, brought into fashion an offensive cant about patriotism and zeal for freedom. What the English Puritans did for the language of Christianity, what Scuderi did for the language of love, they did for the language of public spirit. By habitual exaggeration they made it mean. By monotonous emphasis they made it feeble. They abused it till it became scarcely possible to use it with effect.

Their ordinary rules of morality are deduced from extreme cases. The common regimen which they prescribe for society is made up of those desperate remedies which only its most desperate distempers require. They look with peculiar complacency on actions, which even those who approve them consider as exceptions to laws of almost universal

application—which bear so close an affinity to the most atrocious crimes, that even where it may be unjust to censure them, it is unsafe to praise them. It is not strange, therefore, that some flagitious instances of perfidy and cruelty should have been passed unchallenged in such company—that grave moralists, with no personal interest at stake, should have extolled, in the highest terms, deeds of which the atrocity appalled even the infuriated factions in whose cause they were perpretated. The part which Timoleon took in the assassination of his brother shocked many of his own partisans. The recollection of it preyed long on his own mind. But it was reserved for historians who lived some centuries later to discover that his conduct was a glorious display of virtue, and to lament that, from the frailty of human nature, a man who could perform so great an exploit could repent of it.

The writings of these men, and of their modern imitators, have produced effects which deserve some notice. The English have been so long accustomed to political speculation, and have enjoyed so large a measure of practical liberty, that such works have produced little effect on their minds. We have classical associations and great names of our own, which we can confidently oppose to the most splendid of ancient times. Senate has not to our ears a sound so venerable as Parliament. We respect the Great Charter more than the laws of Solon. The Capitol and the Forum impress us with less awe than our own Westminster Hall and Westminster Abbey, the place where the great men of twenty generations have contended, the place where they sleep together! The list of warriors and statesmen by whom our constitution was founded or preserved, from De Monfort down to Fox, may well stand a comparison with the Fasti of Rome. The dying thanksgiving of Sidney is as noble as the libation which Thrasea poured to Liberating Jove: and we think with far less pleasure of Cato tearing out his entrails, than of Russell saying, as he turned away from his wife, that the bitterness of death was past.—Even those parts of our history, over which, on some accounts, we would gladly throw a veil, may be proudly opposed to those on which the moralists of antiquity loved most to dwell. The enemy of English liberty was not

murdered by men whom he had pardoned and loaded with benefits. He was not stabbed in the back by those who smiled and cringed before his face. He was vanquished on fields of stricken battle; he was arraigned, sentenced, and executed in the face of heaven and earth. Our liberty is neither Greek nor Roman, but essentially English. It has a character of its own—a character which has taken a tinge from the sentiments of the chivalrous ages, and which accords with the peculiarities of our manners and of our insular situation. It has a language, too, of its own, and a language singularly idiomatic, full of meaning to ourselves, scarcely intelligible to strangers.

Here, therefore, the effect of books, such as those which we have been considering, has been harmless. They have, indeed, given currency to many very erroneous opinions with respect to ancient history. They have heated the imagination of boys. They have misled the judgment and corrupted the taste of some men of letters, such as Akenside and Sir William Jones. But on persons engaged in public affairs they have had very little influence. The foundations of our constitution were laid by men who knew nothing of the Greeks, but that they denied the orthodox procession and cheated the Crusaders; and nothing of Rome, but that the Pope lived there. Those who followed, contented themselves with improving on the original plan. They found models at home, and therefore they did not look for them abroad. But when enlightened men on the continent began to think about political reformation, having no patterns before their eyes in their domestic history, they naturally had recourse to those remains of antiquity, the study of which is considered throughout Europe as an important part of education. The historians of whom we have been speaking had been members of large communities, and subjects of absolute sovereigns. Hence it is, as we have already said, that they commit such gross errors in speaking of the little republics of antiquity. Their works were now read in the spirit in which they had been written. They were read by men placed in circumstances closely resembling their own, unacquainted with the real nature of liberty, but inclined to believe every thing good which could be told respecting it. How powerfully these books impressed these specula-

tive reformers, is well known to all who have paid any attention to the French literature of the last century. But, perhaps, the writer on whom they produced the greatest effect, was Vittorio Alfieri. In some of his plays, particularly in Virginia, Timoleon, and Brutus the Younger, he has even caricatured the extravagance of his masters.

It was not strange that the blind, thus led by the blind, should stumble. The transactions of the French Revolution, in some measure, took their character from these works. Without the assistance of these works, indeed, a revolution would have taken place—a revolution productive of much good and much evil, tremendous, but short-lived evil, dearly purchased, but durable good. But it would not have been exactly such a revolution. The style, the accessories, would have been in many respects different. There would have been less of bombast in language, less of affectation in manner, less of solemn trifling and ostentatious simplicity. The acts of legislative assemblies, and the correspondence of diplomatists would not have been disgraced by rants worthy only of a college of declamation. The government of a great and polished nation would not have rendered itself ridiculous by attempting to revive the usages of a world which had long passed away, or rather of a world which had never existed except in the description of a fantastic school of writers. These second-hand imitations resembled the originals about as much as the classical feasts with which the Doctor in Peregrine Pickle turned the stomachs of all his guests resembled one of the suppers of Lucullus in the Hall of Apollo.

These were mere follies. But the spirit excited by these writers produced more serious effects. The greater part of the crimes which disgraced the revolution sprung indeed from the relaxation of law, from popular ignorance, from the remembrance of past oppression, from the fear of foreign conquest, from rapacity, from ambition, from party spirit. But many atrocious proceedings must, doubtless, be ascribed to heated imagination, to perverted principle, to a distaste for what was vulgar in morals, and a passion for what was startling and dubious. Mr. Burke has touched on this subject with great felicity of expression: "The gradation of their republic," says he, "is laid in moral paradoxes.

All those instances to be found in history, whether real or fabulous, of a doubtful public spirit, at which morality is perplexed, reason is staggered, and from which affrighted nature recoils, are their chosen and almost sole examples for the instruction of their youth." This evil, we believe, is to be directly ascribed to the influence of the historians whom we have mentioned, and their modern imitators.

Livy had some faults in common with these writers; but on the whole he must be considered as forming a class by himself. No historian with whom we are acquainted has shown so complete an indifference to truth. He seems to have cared only about the picturesque effect of his book and the honour of his country. On the other hand, we do not know, in the whole range of literature, an instance of a bad thing so well done. The painting of the narrative is beyond description vivid and graceful. The abundance of interesting sentiments and splendid imagery in the speeches is almost miraculous. His mind is a soil which is never overteemed, a fountain which never seems to trickle. It pours forth profusely, yet it gives no sign of exhaustion. It was probably to this exuberance of thought and language, always fresh, always sweet, always pure, no sooner yielded than repaired, that the critics applied that expression which has been so much discussed, *lactea ubertas*.

All the merits and all the defects of Livy take a colouring from the character of his nation. He was a writer peculiarly Roman; the proud citizen of a commonwealth which had indeed lost the reality of liberty, but which still sacredly preserved its forms—in fact the subject of an arbitrary prince, but in his own estimation one of the masters of the world, with a hundred kings below him, and only the gods above him. He therefore looked back on former times with feelings far different from those which were naturally entertained by his Greek contemporaries, and which at a later period became general among men of letters throughout the Roman empire. He contemplated the past with interest and delight, not because it furnished a contrast to the present, but because it had led to the present. He recurred to it, not to lose in proud recollections the sense of national degradation, but to trace the progress of national glory. It is true, that his veneration for antiquity produced on him

some of the effects which it produced on those who arrived at it by a very different road. He has something of their exaggeration, something of their cant, something of their fondness for anomalies and *lusus naturæ* in morality. Yet even here we perceive a difference. They talk rapturously of patriotism and liberty in the abstract. He does not seem to think any country but Rome deserving of love; nor is it for liberty as liberty, but for liberty as a part of the Roman institutions, that he is zealous.

Of the concise and elegant accounts of the campaigns of Cæsar, little can be said. They are incomparable models for military despatches; but histories they are not, and do not pretend to be.

The ancient critics placed Sallust in the same rank with Livy; and unquestionably the small portion of his works which has come down to us is calculated to give a high opinion of his talents. But his style is not very pleasant; and his most powerful work, the account of the Conspiracy of Catiline, has rather the air of a clever party pamphlet than that of a history. It abounds with strange inconsistencies, which, unexplained as they are, necessarily excite doubts as to the fairness of the narrative. It is true, that many circumstances now forgotten may have been familiar to his contemporaries, and may have rendered passages clear to them which to us appear dubious and perplexing. But a great historian should remember that he writes for distant generations, for men who will perceive the apparent contradictions, and will possess no means of reconciling them. We can only vindicate the fidelity of Sallust at the expense of his skill. But in fact, all the information which we have from contemporaries respecting this famous plot is liable to the same objection, and is read by discerning men with the same incredulity. It is all on one side. No answer has reached our times; yet, on the showing of the accusers, the accused seem entitled to acquittal. Catiline, we are told, intrigued with a Vestal virgin, and murdered his own son. His house was a den of gamblers and debauchees. No young man could cross his threshold without danger to his fortune and reputation. Yet this is the man with whom Cicero was willing to coalesce in a contest for the first magistracy of the republic; and whom he described, long after

the fatal termination of the conspiracy, as an accomplished hypocrite, by whom he had himself been deceived, and who had acted with consummate skill the character of a good citizen and a good friend. We are told that the plot was the most wicked and desperate ever known, and, almost in the same breath, that the great body of the people, and many of the nobles favoured it; that the richest citizens of Rome were eager for the spoliation of all property, and its highest functionaries for the destruction of all order; that Crassus, Cæsar, the prætor Lentulus, one of the consuls of the year, one of the consuls elect, were proved or suspected to be engaged in a scheme for subverting institutions to which they owed the highest honours, and introducing universal anarchy. We are told, that a government which knew all this suffered the conspirator, whose rank, talents, and courage rendered him most dangerous, to quit Rome without molestation. We are told, that bondmen and gladiators were to be armed against the citizens. Yet we find that Catiline rejected the slaves who crowded to enlist in his army, lest, as Sallust himself expresses it, "he should seem to identify their cause with that of the citizens." Finally, we are told that the magistrate, who was universally allowed to have saved all classes of his countrymen from conflagration and massacre, rendered himself so unpopular by his conduct, that a marked insult was offered to him at the expiration of his office, and a severe punishment inflicted on him shortly after.

Sallust tells us, what, indeed, the letters and speeches of Cicero sufficiently prove, that some persons considered the shocking and atrocious parts of the plot as mere inventions of the government, designed to excuse its unconstitutional measures. We must confess ourselves to be of that opinion. There was, undoubtedly, a strong party desirous to change the administration. While Pompey held the command of an army, they could not effect their purpose without preparing means for repelling force, if necessary, by force. In all this there is nothing different from the ordinary practice of Roman factions. The other charges brought against the conspirators are so inconsistent and improbable, that we give no credit whatever to them. If our readers think this skepticism unreasonable, let them turn to the contemporary

account of the Popish plot. Let them look over the votes of Parliament, and the speeches of the king; the charges of Scroggs, and the harangues of the managers employed against Strafford. A person, who should form his judgment from these pieces alone, would believe that London was set on fire by the Papists, and that Sir Edmondbury Godfrey was murdered for his religion. Yet these stories are now altogether exploded. They have been abandoned by statesmen to aldermen, by aldermen to clergymen, by clergymen to old women, and by old women to Sir Harcourt Lees.

Of the Latin historians, Tacitus was certainly the greatest. His style, indeed, is not only faulty in itself, but is, in some respects, peculiarly unfit for historical composition. He carries his love of effect far beyond the limits of moderation. He tells a fine story finely: but he cannot tell a plain story plainly. He stimulates till all stimulants lose their power. Thucydides, as we have already observed, relates ordinary transactions with the unpretending clearness and succinctness of the gazette. His great powers of painting he reserves for events of which the slightest details are interesting. The simplicity of the setting gives additional lustre to the brilliants. There are passages in the narrative of Tacitus superior to the best which can be quoted from Thucydides. But they are not enchased and relieved with the same skill. They are far more striking when extracted from the body of the work to which they belong, than when they occur in their place and are read in connection with what precedes and follows.

In the delineation of character, Tacitus is unrivalled among historians, and has very few superiors among dramatists and novelists. By the delineation of character, we do not mean the practice of drawing up epigrammatic catalogues of good and bad qualities, and appending them to the names of eminent men. No writer, indeed, has done this more skilfully than Tacitus: but this is not his peculiar glory. All the persons who occupy a large space in his works have an individuality of character which seems to pervade all their words and actions. We know them as if we had lived with them. Claudius, Nero, Otho, both the Agrippinas, are masterpieces. But Tiberius is a still higher miracle of art. The historian undertook to make us inti-

mately acquainted with a man singularly dark and inscrutable—with a man whose real disposition long remained swathed up in intricate folds of factitious virtues; and over whose actions the hypocrisy of his youth, and the seclusion of his old age, threw a singular mystery. He was to exhibit the specious qualities of the tyrant in a light which might render them transparent, and enable us at once to perceive the covering and the vices which it concealed. He was to trace the gradations by which the first magistrate of a republic, a senator mingling freely in debate, a noble associating with his brother nobles, was transformed into an Asiatic sultan; he was to exhibit a character distinguished by courage, self-command, and profound policy, yet defiled by all

"th' extravagancy
And crazy ribaldry of fancy."

He was to mark the gradual effect of advancing age and approaching death on this strange compound of strength and weakness; to exhibit the old sovereign of the world sinking into a dotage which, though it rendered his appetites eccentric, and his temper savage, never impaired the powers of his stern and penetrating mind, conscious of failing strength, raging with capricious sensuality, yet to the last the keenest of observers, the most artful of dissemblers, and the most terrible of masters. The task was one of extreme difficulty. The execution is almost perfect.

The talent which is required to write history thus bears a considerable affinity to the talent of a great dramatist. There is one obvious distinction. The dramatist creates, the historian only disposes. The difference is not in the mode of execution, but in the mode of conception. Shakspeare is guided by a model which exists in his imagination; Tacitus, by a model furnished from without. Hamlet is to Tiberius what the Laocoon is to the Newton of Roubilliac.

In this part of his art, Tacitus certainly had neither equal nor second among the ancient historians. Herodotus, though he wrote in a dramatic form, had little of dramatic genius. The frequent dialogues which he introduces give vivacity and movement to the narrative, but are not strikingly characteristic. Xenophon is fond of telling his readers, at considerable length, what he thought of the persons whose ad-

ventures he relates. But he does not show them the men, and enable them to judge for themselves. The heroes of Livy are the most insipid of all beings, real or imaginary, the heroes of Plutarch always excepted. Indeed, the manner of Plutarch in this respect reminds us of the cookery of those continental inns, the horror of English travellers, in which a certain nondescript broth is kept constantly boiling, and copiously poured, without distinction, over every dish as it comes up to table. Thucydides, though at a wide interval, comes next to Tacitus. His Pericles, his Nicias, his Cleon, his Brasidas, are happily discriminated. The lines are few, the colouring faint; but the general air and expression is caught.

We begin, like the priest in Don Quixote's library, to be tired taking down books one after another for separate judgment, and feel inclined to pass sentence on them in masses. We shall, therefore, instead of pointing out the defects and merits of the different modern historians, state generally in what particulars they have surpassed their predecessors, and in what we conceive them to have failed.

They have certainly been, in one sense, far more strict in their adherence to truth than most of the Greek and Roman writers. They do not think themselves entitled to render their narrative interesting by introducing descriptions, conversations, and harangues, which have no existence but in their own imagination. This improvement was gradually introduced. History commenced among the modern nations of Europe, as it had commenced among the Greeks, in romance. Froissart was our Herodotus. Italy was to Europe what Athens was to Greece. In Italy, therefore, a more accurate and manly mode of narration was early introduced. Machiavelli and Guicciardini, in imitation of Livy and Thucydides, composed speeches for their historical personages. But as the classical enthusiasm which distinguished the age of Lorenzo and Leo gradually subsided, this absurd practice was abandoned. In France, we fear, it still, in some degree, keeps its ground. In our own country, a writer who should venture on it would be laughed to scorn. Whether the historians of the last two centuries tell more truth than those of antiquity, may perhaps be doubted. But it is quite certain that they tell fewer falsehoods.

In the philosophy of history, the moderns have very far surpassed the ancients. It is not, indeed, strange that the Greeks and Romans should not have carried the science of government, or any other experimental science, so far as it has been carried in our time; for the experimental sciences are generally in a state of progression. They were better understood in the seventeenth century than in the sixteenth, and in the eighteenth century than in the seventeenth. But this constant improvement, this natural growth of knowledge, will not altogether account for the immense superiority of the modern writers. The difference is a difference, not in degree, but of kind. It is not merely that new principles have been discovered, but that new faculties seem to be exerted. It is not that at one time the human intellect should have made but small progress, and at another time have advanced far; but that at one time it should have been stationary, and at another time constantly proceeding. In taste and imagination, in the graces of style, in the arts of persuasion, in the magnificence of public works, the ancients were at least our equals. They reasoned as justly as ourselves on subjects which required pure demonstration. But in the moral sciences they made scarcely any advance. During the long period which elapsed between the fifth century before the Christian era and the fifth century after it, little perceptible progress was made. All the metaphysical discoveries of all the philosophers, from the time of Socrates to the northern invasion, are not to be compared in importance with those which have been made in England every fifty years since the time of Elizabeth. There is not the least reason to believe that the principles of government, legislation, and political economy were better understood in the time of Augustus Cæsar, than in the time of Pericles. In our own country, the sound doctrines of trade and jurisprudence have been, within the lifetime of a single generation, dimly hinted, boldly propounded, defended, systematized, adopted by all reflecting men of all parties, quoted in legislative assemblies, incorporated into laws and treaties.

To what is this change to be attributed? Partly, no doubt, to the discovery of printing,—a discovery which has

not only diffused knowledge widely, but, as we have already observed, has also introduced into reasoning a precision unknown in those ancient communities, in which information was, for the most part, conveyed orally. There was, we suspect, another cause, less obvious, but still more powerful.

The spirit of the two most famous nations of antiquity was remarkably exclusive. In the time of Homer, the Greeks had not begun to consider themselves as a distinct race. They still looked with something of childish wonder and awe on the riches and wisdom of Sidon and Egypt. From what causes, and by what gradations, their feelings underwent a change, it is not easy to determine. Their history, from the Trojan to the Persian war, is covered with an obscurity broken only by dim and scattered gleams of truth. But it is certain that a great alteration took place. They regarded themselves as a separate people. They had common religious rites, and common principles of public law, in which foreigners had no part. In all their political systems, monarchical, aristocratical, and democratical, there was a strong family likeness. After the retreat of Xerxes and the fall of Mardonius, national pride rendered the separation between the Greeks and the Barbarians complete. The conquerors considered themselves men of a superior breed, men who, in their intercourse with the neighbouring nations, were to teach, and not to learn. They looked for nothing out of themselves. They borrowed nothing. They translated nothing. We cannot call to mind a single expression of any Greek writer earlier than the age of Augustus, indicating an opinion that any thing worth reading could be written in any language except his own. The feelings which sprung from national glory were not altogether extinguished by national degradation. They were fondly cherished through ages of slavery and shame. The literature of Rome herself was regarded with contempt by those who had fled before her arms, and who bowed beneath her fasces. Voltaire says, in one of his six thousand pamphlets, that he was the first person who told the French that England had produced eminent men besides the Duke of Marlborough. Down to a very late period, the Greeks seem to have stood in need of similar information with respect to their masters. With Paulus Æmilius, Sylla, and Cæsar, they were well

acquainted. But the notions which they entertained respecting Cicero and Virgil were, probably, not unlike those which Boileau may have formed about Shakspeare. Dionysius lived in the most splendid age of Latin poetry and eloquence. He was a critic, and, after the manner of his age, an able critic. He studied the language of Rome, associated with its learned men, and compiled its history. Yet he seems to have thought its literature valuable only for the purpose of illustrating its antiquities. His reading appears to have been confined to its public records and to a few old annalists. Once, and but once, if we remember rightly, he quotes Ennius, to solve a question of etymology. He has written much on the art of oratory; yet he has not mentioned the name of Cicero.

The Romans submitted to the pretensions of a race which they despised. Their epic poet, while he claimed for them pre-eminence in the arts of government and war, acknowledged their inferiority in taste, eloquence, and science. Men of letters affected to understand the Greek language better than their own. Pomponius preferred the honour of becoming an Athenian, by intellectual naturalization, to all the distinctions which were to be acquired in the political contests of Rome. His great friend composed Greek poems and memoirs. It is well known that Petrarch considered that beautiful language in which his sonnets are written, as a barbarous jargon, and intrusted his fame to those wretched Latin hexameters, which, during the last four centuries, have scarcely found four readers. Many eminent Romans appear to have felt the same contempt for their native tongue as compared with the Greek. The prejudice continued to a very late period. Julian was as partial to the Greek language as Frederick the Great to the French; and it seems that he could not express himself with elegance in the dialect of the state which he ruled.

Even those Latin writers who did not carry this affectation so far, looked on Greece as the only fount of knowledge. From Greece they derived the measures of their poetry, and indeed, all of poetry that can be imported. From Greece they borrowed the principles and the vocabulary of their philosophy. To the literature of other nations they do not seem to have paid the slightest attention. The sacred books

of the Hebrews, for example, books which, considered merely as human compositions, are invaluable to the critic, the antiquary, and the philosopher, seem to have been utterly unnoticed by them. The peculiarities of Judaism, and the rapid growth of Christianity, attracted their notice. They made war against the Jews. They made laws against the Christians. But they never opened the books of Moses. Juvenal quotes the Pentateuch with censure. The author of the treatise on "the Sublime" quotes it with praise: but both of them quote it erroneously. When we consider what sublime poetry, what curious history, what striking and peculiar views of the divine nature, and of the social duties of men, are to be found in the Jewish Scriptures; when we consider the two sects on which the attention of the government was constantly fixed, appealed to those Scriptures as the rule of their faith and practice this indifference is astonishing. The fact seems to be, that the Greeks admired only themselves, and that the Romans admired only themselves and the Greeks. Literary men turned away with disgust from modes of thought and expression so widely different from all that they had been accustomed to admire. The effect was narrowness and sameness of thought. Their minds, if we may so express ourselves, bred in and in, and were accordingly cursed with barrenness and degeneracy. No extraneous beauty or vigour was engrafted on the decaying stock. By an exclusive attention to one class of phenomena, by an exclusive taste for one species of excellence, the human intellect was stunted. Occasional coincidences were turned into general rules. Prejudices were confounded with instincts. On man, as he was found in a particular state of society, on government, as it had existed in a particular corner of the world, many just observations were made; but of man as man, or government as government, little was known. Philosophy remained stationary. Slight changes, sometimes for the worse and sometimes for the better, were made in the superstructure. But nobody thought of examining the foundations.

The vast despotism of the Cæsars, gradually effacing all national peculiarities, and assimilating the remotest provinces of the Empire to each other, augmented the evil. At the close of the third century after Christ, the prospects of mankind were fearfully dreary. A system of etiquette, as

pompously frivolous as that of the Escurial, had been established. A sovereign almost invisible; a crowd of dignitaries minutely distinguished by badges and titles; rhetoricians who said nothing but what had been said ten thousand times; schools in which nothing was taught but what had been known for ages—such was the machinery provided for the government and instruction of the most enlightened part of the human race. That great community was then in danger of experiencing a calamity far more terrible than any of the quick, inflammatory, destroying maladies to which nations are liable—a tottering, drivelling, paralytic longevity, the immortality of the Struldbrugs, a Chinese civilization. It would be easy to indicate many points of resemblance between the subjects of Diocletian and the people of that Celestial Empire, where, during many centuries nothing has been learned or unlearned; where government, where education, where the whole system of life is a ceremony; where knowledge forgets to increase and multiply, and, like the talent buried in the earth, or the pound wrapped up in the napkin, experiences neither waste nor augmentation.

The torpor was broken by two great revolutions, the one moral, the other political, the one from within, the other from without. The victory of Christianity over paganism, considered with relation to this subject only, was of great importance. It overthrew the old system of morals; and, with it, much of the old system of metaphysics. It furnished the orator with new topics of declamation, and the logician with new points of controversy. Above all, it introduced a new principle, of which the operation was constantly felt in every part of society. It stirred the stagnant mass from the inmost depths. It excited all the passions of a stormy democracy in the quiet and listless population of an overgrown empire. The fear of heresy did what the sense of oppression could not do; it changed men, accustomed to be turned over like sheep from tyrant to tyrant, into devoted partisans and obstinate rebels. The tones of an eloquence which had been silent for ages resounded from the pulpit of Gregory. A spirit which had been extinguished on the plains of Philippi, revived in Athanasius and Ambrose.

Yet even this remedy was not sufficiently violent for the disease. It did not prevent the empire of Constantinople

from relapsing, after a short paroxysm of excitement, into a state of stupefaction, to which history furnishes scarcely any parallel. We there find that a polished society, a society in which a most intricate and elaborate system of jurisprudence was established, in which the arts of luxury were well understood, in which the works of the great ancient writers were preserved and studied, existed for nearly a thousand years without making one great discovery in science, or producing one book which is read by any but curious inquirers. There were tumults, too, and controversies, and wars in abundance; and these things, bad as they are in themselves, have generally been favourable to the progress of the intellect. But here they tormented without stimulating. The waters were troubled, but no healing influence descended. The agitations resembled the grinnings and writhings of a galvanized corpse, not the struggles of an athletic man.

From this miserable state the Western Empire was saved by the fiercest and most destroying visitation with which God had ever chastened his creatures—the invasion of the Northern nations. Such a cure was required for such a distemper. The Fire of London, it has been observed, was a blessing. It burned down the city, but it burned out the plague. The same may be said of the tremendous devastation of the Roman dominions. It annihilated the noisome recesses in which lurked the seeds of great moral maladies; it cleared an atmosphere fatal to the health and vigour of the human mind. (It cost Europe a thousand years of barbarism to escape the fate of China.)

At length the terrible purification was accomplished; and the second civilization of mankind commenced, under circumstances which afforded a strong security that it would never retrograde and never pause. Europe was now a great federal community. Her numerous states were united by the easy ties of international law and a common religion. Their institutions, their languages, their manners, their tastes in literature, their modes of education, were widely different. Their connection was close enough to allow of mutual observation and improvement, yet not so close as to destroy the idioms of natural opinion and feeling.

The balance of moral and intellectual influence, thus

established between the nations of Europe, is far more important than the balance of political power. Indeed, we are inclined to think that the latter is valuable principally because it tends to maintain the former. The civilized world has thus been preserved from an uniformity of character fatal to all improvement. Every part of it has been illuminated with light reflected from every other. Competition has produced activity where monopoly would have produced sluggishness. The number of experiments in moral science, which the speculator has an opportunity of witnessing, has been increased beyond all calculation. Society and human nature, instead of being seen in a single point of view, are presented to him under ten thousand different aspects. By observing the manners of surrounding nations, by studying their literature, by comparing it with that of his own country and of the ancient republics, he is enabled to correct those errors into which the most acute men must fall when they reason from a single species to a genus. He learns to distinguish what is local from what is universal; what is transitory from what is eternal; to discriminate between exceptions and rules; to trace the operation of disturbing causes; to separate those general principles which are always true and everywhere applicable, from the accidental circumstances with which, in every community, they are blended, and with which, in an isolated community, they are confounded by the most philosophical mind.

Hence it is, that in generalization, the writers of modern times have far surpassed those of antiquity. The historians of our own country are unequalled in depth and precision of reason; and even in the works of our mere compilers, we often meet with speculations beyond the reach of Thucydides or Tacitus.

But it must, at the same time, be admitted that they have characteristic faults, so closely connected with their characteristic merits, and of such magnitude, that it may well be doubted whether, on the whole, this department of literature has gained or lost during the last two-and-twenty centuries.

The best historians of later times have been seduced from truth, not by their imagination, but by their reason. They far excel their predecessors in the art of deducing general principles from facts. But, unhappily, they have fallen into

the error of distorting facts to suit general principles. They arrive at the theory from looking at some of the phenomena, and the remaining phenomena they strain or curtail to suit the theory. For this purpose it is not necessary that they should assert what is absolutely false, for all questions in morals and politics are questions of comparison and degree. Any proposition which does not involve a contradiction in terms may, by possibility, be true; and if all the circumstances which raise a probability in its favour be stated and enforced, and those which lead to an opposite conclusion be omitted or lightly passed over, it may appear to be demonstrated. In every human character and transaction there is a mixture of good and evil;—a little exaggeration, a little suppression, a judicious use of epithets, a watchful and searching skepticism with respect to the evidence on one side, a convenient credulity with respect to every report or tradition on the other, may easily make a saint of Laud, or a tyrant of Henry the Fourth.

This species of misrepresentation abounds in the most valuable works of modern historians. Herodotus tells his story like a slovenly witness, who, heated by partialities and prejudices, unacquainted with the established rules of evidence, and uninstructed as to the obligations of his oath, confounds what he imagines with what he has seen and heard, and brings out facts, reports, conjectures, and fancies in one mass. Hume is an accomplished advocate. Without positively asserting much more than he can prove, he gives prominence to all the circumstances which support his case; he glides lightly over those which are unfavourable to it; his own witnesses are applauded and encouraged; the statements which seem to throw discredit on them are controverted; the contradictions into which they fall are explained away; a clear and connected abstract of their evidence is given. Every thing that is offered on the other side is scrutinized with the utmost severity; every suspicious circumstance is a ground for comment and invective; what cannot be denied is extenuated, or passed by without notice; concessions even are sometimes made; but this insidious candour only increases the effect of the vast mass of sophistry.

We have mentioned Hume, as the ablest and most popu-

lar writer of his class; but the charge which we have brought against him is one to which all our most distinguished historians are in some degree obnoxious. Gibbon, in particular, deserves very severe censure. Of all the numerous culprits, however, none is more deeply guilty than Mr. Mitford. We willingly acknowledge the obligations which are due to his talents and industry. The modern historians of Greece had been in the habit of writing as if the world had learned nothing new during the last sixteen hundred years. Instead of illustrating the events which they narrated, by the philosophy of a more enlightened age, they judged of antiquity by itself alone. They seemed to think that notions, long driven from every other corner of literature, had a prescriptive right to occupy this last fastness. They considered all the ancient historians as equally authentic. They scarcely made any distinction between him who related events at which he had himself been present, and him who, five hundred years after, composed a philosophical romance for a society which had, in the interval, undergone a complete change. It was all Greek, and all true! The centuries which separated Plutarch from Thucydides seemed as nothing to men who lived in an age so remote. The distance of time produced an error similar to that which is sometimes produced by distance of place. There are many good ladies who think that all the people in India live together, and who charge a friend setting out for Calcutta with kind messages to Bombay. To Rollin and Barthelemi, in the same manner, all the classics were contemporaries.

Mr. Mitford certainly introduced great improvements; he showed us that men who wrote in Greek and Latin sometimes told lies; he showed us that ancient history might be related in such a manner as to furnish not only allusions to school-boys, but important lessons to statesmen. From that love of theatrical effect and high-flown sentiment which had poisoned almost every other work on the same subject, his book is perfectly free. But his passion for a theory as false, and far more ungenerous, led him substantially to violate truth in every page. Sentiments unfavourable to democracy are made with unhesitating confidence, and with the utmost bitterness of language. Every charge brought against a monarch, or an aristocracy, is sifted with the utmost care.

If it cannot be denied, some palliating supposition is suggested, or we are at least reminded that some circumstance now unknown *may* have justified what at present appears unjustifiable. Two events are reported by the same author in the same sentence; their truth rests on the same testimony; but the one supports the darling hypothesis, and the other seems inconsistent with it. The one is taken and the other is left.

The practice of distorting narrative into a conformity with theory, is a vice not so unfavourable as at first sight it may appear, to the interest of political science. We have compared the writers who indulge in it to advocates; and we may add, that their conflicting fallacies, like those of advocates, correct each other. It has always been held, in the most enlightened nations, that a tribunal will decide a judicial question most fairly, when it has heard two able men argue, as unfairly as possible, on the two opposite sides of it; and we are inclined to think that this opinion is just. Sometimes, it is true, superior eloquence and dexterity will make the worse appear the better reason; but it is at least certain that the judge will be compelled to contemplate the case under two different aspects. It is certain that no important consideration will altogether escape notice.

This is, at present, the state of history. The poet laureate appears for the Church of England, Lingard for the Church of Rome. Brodie has moved to set aside the verdicts obtained by Hume; and the cause in which Mitford succeeded is, we understand, about to be reheard. In the midst of these disputes, however, history proper, if we may use the term, is disappearing. The high, grave, impartial summing up of Thucydides is nowhere to be found.

While our historians are practising all the arts of controversy, they miserably neglect the art of narration, the art of interesting the affections and presenting pictures to the imagination. That a writer may produce these effects without violating truth, is sufficiently proved by many excellent biographical works. The immense popularity which well-written books of this kind have acquired, deserves the serious consideration of historians. Voltaire's Charles the Twelfth, Marmontel's Memoirs, Boswell's Life of Johnson, Southey's Account of Nelson, are perused with delight by

the most frivolous and indolent. Whenever any tolerable book of the same description makes its appearance, the circulating libraries are mobbed; the book societies are in commotion; the new novel lies uncut; the magazines and newspapers fill their columns with extracts. In the mean time, histories of great empires, written by men of eminent ability, lie unread on the shelves of ostentatious libraries.

The writers of history seem to entertain an aristocratical contempt for the writers of memoirs. They think it beneath the dignity of men who describe the revolutions of nations, to dwell on the details which constitute the charm of biography. They have imposed on themselves a code of conventional decencies as absurd as that which has been the bane of the French drama. The most characteristic and interesting circumstances are omitted or softened down, because, as we are told, they are too trivial for the majesty of history. The majesty of history seems to resemble the majesty of the poor King of Spain, who died a martyr to ceremony, because the proper dignitaries were not at hand to render him assistance.

That history would be more amusing if this etiquette were relaxed, will, we suppose, be acknowledged. But would it be less dignified or useful? What do we mean, when we say that one past event is important, and another insignificant? No past event has any intrinsic importance. The knowledge of it is valuable only as it leads us to form just calculations with respect to the future. A history which does not serve this purpose, though it may be filled with battles, treaties, and commotions, is as useless as the series of turnpike-tickets collected by Sir Mathew Mite.

Let us suppose that Lord Clarendon, instead of filling hundreds of folio pages with copies of state-papers, in which the same assertions and contradictions are repeated, till the reader is overpowered with weariness, had condescended to be the Boswell of the Long Parliament. Let us suppose that he had exhibited to us the wise and lofty self-government of Hampden, leading while he seemed to follow, and propounding unanswerable arguments in the strongest forms, with the modest air of an inquirer anxious for information; the delusions which misled the noble spirit of Vane; the coarse fanaticism which concealed the yet loftier genius of

Cromwell, destined to control a mutinous army and a factious people, to abase the flag of Holland, to arrest the victorious arms of Sweden, and to hold the balance firm between the rival monarchies of France and Spain. Let us suppose that he had made his Cavaliers and Roundheads talk in their own style; that he had reported some of the ribaldry of Rupert's pages, and some of the cant of Harrison and Fleetwood. Would not his work, in that case, have been more interesting? Would it not have been more accurate?

A history in which every particular incident may be true, may on the whole be false. The circumstances which have most influence on the happiness of mankind, the changes of manners and morals, the transition of communities from poverty to wealth, from knowledge to ignorance, from ferocity to humanity—these are, for the most part, noiseless revolutions. Their progress is rarely indicated by what historians are pleased to call important events. They are not achieved by armies, or enacted by senates. They are sanctioned by no treaties, and recorded in no archives. They are carried on in every school, in every church, behind ten thousand counters, at ten thousand firesides. The upper current of society presents no certain criterion by which we can judge of the direction in which the under current flows. We read of defeats and victories. But we know that nations may be miserable amidst victories, and prosperous amidst defeats. We read of the fall of wise ministers, and of the rise of profligate favourites. But we must remember how small a proportion the good or evil affected by a single statesman can bear to the good or evil of a great social system.

Bishop Watson compares a geologist to a gnat mounted on an elephant, and laying down theories as to the whole internal structure of the vast animal, from the phenomena of the hide. The comparison is unjust to the geologists; but it is very applicable to those historians who write as if the body politic were homogeneous, who look only on the surface of affairs, and never think of the mighty and various organization which lies deep below.

In the works of such writers as these, England, at the close of the Seven Years' War, is in the highest state of prosperity. At the close of the American War, she is in a

miserable and degraded condition; as if the people were not on the whole as rich, as well governed, and as well educated at the latter period as at the former. We have read books called Histories of England, under the reign of George the Second, in which the rise of Methodism is not even mentioned. A hundred years hence, this breed of authors will, we hope, be extinct. If it should still exist, the late ministerial interregnum will be described in terms which will seem to imply that all government was at an end; that the social contract was annulled, and that the hand of every man was against his neighbour, until the wisdom and virtue of the new cabinet educed order out of the chaos of anarchy. We are quite certain that misconceptions as gross prevail at this moment, respecting many important parts of our annals.

The effect of historical reading is analogous, in many respects, to that produced by foreign travel. The student, like the tourist, is transported into a new state of society. He sees new fashions. He hears new modes of expression. His mind is enlarged by contemplating the wide diversities of laws, of morals, and of manners. But men may travel far, and return with minds as contracted as if they had never stirred from their own market-town. In the same manner, men may know the dates of many battles, and the genealogies of many royal houses, and yet be no wiser. Most people look at past times as princes look at foreign countries. More than one illustrious stranger has landed on our island amidst the shouts of a mob, has dined with the king, has hunted with the master of the stag-hounds, has seen the guards reviewed, and a knight of the garter installed; has cantered along Regent street; has visited St. Paul's, and noted down its dimensions, and has then departed, thinking that he has seen England. He has, in fact, seen a few public buildings, public men, and public ceremonies. But of the vast and complex system of society, of the fine shades of national character, of the practical operation of government and laws, he knows nothing. He who would understand these things rightly, must not confine his observations to palaces and solemn days. He must see ordinary men as they appear in their ordinary business, and in their ordinary pleasures. He must mingle in the crowds of the exchange and the coffee-house. He must obtain ad-

mittance to the convivial table and the domestic hearth. He must bear with vulgar expressions. He must not shrink from exploring even the retreats of misery. He who wishes to understand the condition of mankind in former ages, must proceed on the same principle. If he attends only to public transactions, to wars, congresses, and debates, his studies will be as unprofitable as the travels of those imperial, royal, and serene sovereigns, who form their judgment of our island from having gone in state to a few fine sights, and from having held formal conferences with a few great officers.

The perfect historian is he in whose work the character and spirit of an age is exhibited in miniature. He relates no fact, he attributes no expression to his characters, which is not authenticated by sufficient testimony. But by judicious selection, rejection, and arrangement, he gives to truth those attractions which have been usurped by fiction. In his narrative a due subordination is observed; some transactions are prominent, others retire. But the scale on which he represents them is increased or diminished, not according to the dignity of the persons concerned in them, but according to the degree in which they elucidate the condition of society and the nature of man. He shows us the court, the camp, and the senate. But he shows us also the nation. He considers no anecdote, no peculiarity of manner, no familiar saying, as too insignificant for his notice, which is not too insignificant to illustrate the operation of laws, of religion, and of education, and to mark the progress of the human mind. Men will not merely be described, but will be made intimately known to us. The changes of manners will be indicated, not merely by a few general phrases, or a few extracts from statistical documents, but by appropriate images presented in every line.

If a man, such as we are supposing, should write the history of England, he would assuredly not omit the battles, the sieges, the negotiations, the seditions, the ministerial changes. But with these he would intersperse the details which are the charm of historical romances. At Lincoln Cathedral there is a beautiful painted window, which was made by an apprentice out of the pieces of glass which had been rejected by his master. It is so far superior to every other in the church, that, according to the tradition, the van-

quished artist killed himself from mortification. Sir Walter Scott, in the same manner, has used those fragments of truth which historians have scornfully thrown behind them, in a manner which may well excite their envy. He has constructed out of their gleanings works which, even considered as histories, are scarcely less valuable than theirs. But a truly great historian would reclaim those materials which the novelist has appropriated. The history of the government and the history of the people would be exhibited in that mode in which alone they can be exhibited justly, in inseparable conjunction and intermixture. We should not then have to look for the wars and votes of the Puritans in Clarendon, and for their phraseology in Old Mortality; for one half of King James in Hume, and for the other half in the Fortunes of Nigel.

The early part of our imaginary history would be rich with colouring from romance, ballad, and chronicle. We should find ourselves in the company of knights such as those of Froissart, and of pilgrims such as those who rode with Chaucer from the Tabard. Society would be shown from the highest to the lowest—from the royal cloth of state to the den of the outlaw; from the throne of the legate to the chimney-corner where the begging friar regaled himself. Palmers, minstrels, crusaders—the stately monastery, with the good cheer in its refectory, and the high-mass in its chapel—the manor-house, with its hunting and hawking—the tournament, with the heralds and ladies, the trumpets and the cloth of gold—would give truth and life to the representation. We should perceive, in a thousand slight touches, the importance of the privileged burgher, and the fierce and haughty spirit which swelled under the collar of the degraded villain. The revival of letters would not merely be described in a few magnificent periods. We should discern, in innumerable particulars, the fermentation of mind, the eager appetite for knowledge, which distinguished the sixteenth from the fifteenth century. In the Reformation we should see, not merely a schism which changed the ecclesiastical constitution of England and the mutual relations of the European powers, but a moral war which raged in every family, which set the father against the son, and the son against the father, the mother against

the daughter, and the daughter against the mother. Henry would be painted with the skill of Tacitus. We should have the change of his character from his profuse and joyous youth to his savage and imperious old age. We should perceive the gradual progress of selfish and tyrannical passions, in a mind not naturally insensible or ungenerous; and to the last we should detect some remains of that open and noble temper which endeared him to a people whom he oppressed, struggling with the hardness of despotism and the irritability of disease. We should see Elizabeth in all her weakness, and in all her strength, surrounded by the handsome favourites whom she never trusted, and the wise old statesmen whom she never dismissed, uniting in herself the most contradictory qualities of both her parents—the coquetry, the caprice, the petty malice of Anne—the haughty and resolute spirit of Henry. We have no hesitation in saying, that a great artist might produce a portrait of this remarkable woman, at least as striking as that in the novel of Kenilworth, without employing a single trait not authenticated by ample testimony. In the mean time, we should see arts cultivated, wealth accumulated, the conveniences of life improved. We should see the keeps, where nobles, insecure themselves, spread insecurity around them, gradually giving place to the halls of peaceful opulence, to the oriels of Longleat, and the stately pinnacles of Burleigh. We should see towns extended, deserts cultivated, the hamlets of fishermen turned into wealthy havens, the meal of the peasant improved, and his hut more commodiously furnished. We should see those opinions and feelings which produced the great struggle against the house of Stuart, slowly growing up in the bosom of private families, before they manifested themselves in parliamentary debates. Then would come the civil war. Those skirmishes, on which Clarendon dwells so minutely, would be told, as Thucydides would have told them, with perspicuous conciseness. They are merely connecting links. But the great characteristics of the age, the loyal enthusiasm of the brave English gentry, the fierce licentiousness of the swearing, dicing, drunken reprobates, whose excesses disgraced the royal cause—the austerity of the Presbyterian Sabbaths in the city, the extravagance of the Independent

preachers in the camp, the precise garb, the severe countenance, the petty scruples, the affected accents, the absurd names and phrases which marked the Puritans—the valour, the policy, the public spirit which lurked beneath these ungraceful disguises—the dreams of the raving Fifth-monarchy-man—the dreams, scarcely less wild, of the philosophic republican—all these would enter into the representation, and render it at once more exact and more striking.

The instruction derived from history thus written would be of a vivid and practical character. It would be received by the imagination as well as by the reason. It would be not merely traced on the mind, but branded into it. Many truths, too, would be learned, which can be learned in no other manner. As the history of states is generally written, the greatest and most momentous revolutions seem to come upon them like supernatural inflictions, without warning or cause. But the fact is, that such revolutions are almost always the consequence of moral changes, which have gradually passed on the mass of the community, and which ordinarily proceed far before their progress is indicated by any public measure. An intimate knowledge of the domestic history of nations is therefore absolutely necessary to the prognosis of political events. A narrative defective in this respect is as useless as a medical treatise which should pass by all the symptoms attendant on the early stage of a disease, and mention only what occurs when the patient is beyond the reach of remedies.

An historian, such as we have been attempting to describe, would indeed be an intellectual prodigy. In his mind, powers, scarcely compatible with each other, must be tempered into an exquisite harmony. We shall sooner see another Shakspeare or another Homer. The highest excellence to which any single faculty can be brought would be less surprising than such a happy and delicate combination of qualities. Yet the contemplation of imaginary models is not an unpleasant or useless employment of the mind. It cannot indeed produce perfection, but it produces improvement, and nourishes that generous and liberal fastidiousness, which is not inconsistent with the strongest sensibility to merit, and which, while it exalts our conceptions of the art, does not render us unjust to the artist.

Hallam's Constitutional History.*

[*Edinburgh Review.*]

HISTORY, at least in its state of imaginary perfection, is a compound of poetry and philosophy. It impresses general truths on the mind by a vivid representation of particular characters and incidents. But, in fact, the two hostile elements of which it consists have never been known to form a perfect amalgamation; and at length, in our own time, they have been completely and professedly separated. Good histories, in the proper sense of the word, we have not. But we have good historical romances, and good historical essays. The imagination and the reason, if we may use a legal metaphor, have made partition of a province of literature of which they were formerly seised *per my et pour tout;* and now they hold their respective portions in severalty, instead of holding the whole in common.

To make the past present, to bring the distant near, to place us in the society of a great man, or on the eminence which overlooks the field of a mighty battle, to invest with the reality of human flesh and blood beings whom we are too much inclined to consider as personified qualities in an allegory, to call up our ancestors before us with all their peculiarities of language, manners, and garb, to show us over their houses, to seat us at their tables, to rummage their old-fashioned wardrobes, to explain the uses of their ponderous furniture—these parts of the duty which properly belongs to the historian have been appropriated by

* *The Constitutional History of England, from the Accession of Henry VII. to the Death of George II.* By HENRY HALLAM. In 2 vols. 1827.

the historical novelist. On the other hand, to extract the philosophy of history—to direct our judgment of events and men—to trace the connection of causes and effects, and to draw from the occurrences of former times general lessons of moral and political wisdom, has become the business of a distinct class of writers.

Of the two kinds of composition into which history has been thus divided, the one may be compared to a map, the other to a painted landscape. The picture, though it places the object before us, does not enable us to ascertain with accuracy the form and dimensions of its component parts, the distances, and the angles. The map is not a work of imitative art. It presents no scene to the imagination; but it gives us exact information as to the bearings of the various points, and is a more useful companion to the traveller or the general than the painting could be, though it were the grandest that ever Rosa peopled with outlaws, or the sweetest over which Claude ever poured the mellow effulgence of a setting sun.

It is remarkable that the practice of separating the two ingredients of which history is composed has become prevalent on the Continent, as well as in this country. Italy has already produced an historical novel, of high merit and of still higher promise. In France, the practice has been carried to a length somewhat whimsical. M. Sismondi publishes a grave and stately history, very valuable, and a little tedious. He then sends forth, as a companion to it, a novel, in which he attempts to give a lively representation of characters and manners. This course, as it seems to us, has all the disadvantages of a division of labour, and none of its advantages. We understand the expediency of keeping the functions of cook and coachman distinct—the dinner will be better dressed, and the horses better managed. But where the two situations are united, as in the Maître Jaques of Molière, we do not see that the matter is much mended by the solemn form with which the pluralist passes from one of his employments to the other.

We manage these things better in England. Sir Walter Scott gives us a novel; Mr. Hallam, a critical and argumentative history. Both are occupied with the same matter. But the former looks at it with the eye of a sculptor.

His intention is to give an express and lively image of its external form. The latter is an anatomist. His task is to dissect the subject to its inmost recesses, and to lay bare before us all the springs of motion, and all the causes of decay.

Mr. Hallam is, on the whole, far better qualified than any other writer of our time for the office which he has undertaken. He has great industry and great acuteness. His knowledge is extensive, various, and profound. His mind is equally distinguished by the amplitude of its grasp, and by the delicacy of its tact. His speculations have none of that vagueness which is the common fault of political philosophy. On the contrary, they are strikingly practical. They teach us not only the general rule, but the mode of applying it to solve particular cases. In this respect they often remind us of the Discourses of Machiavelli.

The style is sometimes harsh, and sometimes obscure. We have also here and there remarked a little of that unpleasant trick which Gibbon brought into fashion—the trick, we mean, of narrating by implication and allusion. Mr. Hallam, however, has an excuse which Gibbon had not. His work is designed for readers who are already acquainted with the ordinary books on English history, and who can therefore unriddle these little enigmas without difficulty. The manner of the book is, on the whole, not unworthy of the matter. The language, even where most faulty, is weighty and massive, and indicates strong sense in every line. It often rises to an eloquence, not florid or impassioned, but high, grave, and sober; such as would become a state-paper, or a judgment delivered by a great magistrate, a Somers, or a D'Aguesseau.

In this respect the character of Mr. Hallam's mind corresponds strikingly with that of his style. His work is eminently judicial. Its whole spirit is that of the bench, not of the bar. He sums up with a calm, steady impartiality, turning neither to the right nor to the left, glossing over nothing, exaggerating nothing, while the advocates on both sides are alternately biting their lips to hear their conflicting misstatements and sophisms exposed. On a general survey, we do not scruple to pronounce the Constitutional History the most impartial book that we ever read. We think it the more incumbent on us to bear this testimony strongly at first

setting out, because, in the course of our remarks, we shall think it right to dwell principally on those parts of it from which we dissent.

There is one peculiarity about Mr. Hallam, which, while it adds to the value of his writings, will, we fear, take away something from their popularity. He is less of a worshipper than any historian whom we can call to mind. Every political sect has its esoteric and its exoteric school; its abstract doctrines for the initiated, its visible symbols, its imposing forms, its mythological fables for the vulgar. It assists the devotion of those who are unable to raise themselves to the contemplation of pure truths, by all the devices of pagan or papal superstition. It has its altars and its deified heroes, its relics and its pilgrimages, its canonized martyrs and confessors, its festivals and its legendary miracles. Our pious ancestors, we are told, deserted the High Altar of Canterbury, to lay all their oblations on the shrine of St. Thomas. In the same manner, the great and comfortable doctrines of the Tory creed, those particularly which relate to restrictions on worship and on trade, are adored by squires and rectors, in Pitt Clubs, under the name of a minister who was as bad as a representative of the system which has been christened after him, as Becket of the spirit of the Gospel. And, on the other hand, the cause for which Hampden bled on the field, and Sidney on the scaffold, is enthusiastically toasted by many an honest radical, who would be puzzled to explain the difference between Ship-money and the Habeas Corpus act. It may be added, that, as in religion, so in politics, few, even of those who are enlightened enough to comprehend the meaning latent under the emblems of their faith, can resist the contagion of the popular superstition. Often, when they flatter themselves that they are merely feigning a compliance with the prejudices of the vulgar, they are themselves under the influence of those very prejudices. It probably was not altogether on grounds of expediency, that Socrates taught his followers to honour the gods whom the state honoured, and bequeathed a cock to Esculapius with his dying breath. So there is often a portion of willing credulity and enthusiasm in the veneration which the most discerning men pay to their political idols. From the very nature of man it

must be so. The faculty by which we inseparably associate ideas which have often been presented to us in conjunction, is not under the absolute control of the will. It may be quickened into morbid activity. It may be reasoned into sluggishness. But in a certain degree it will always exist. The almost absolute mastery which Mr. Hallam has obtained over feelings of this class is perfectly astonishing to us; and will, we believe, be not only astonishing, but offensive to many of his readers. It must particularly disgust those people who, in their speculations on politics, are not reasoners, but fanciers; whose opinions, even when sincere, are not produced, according to the ordinary law of intellectual births, by induction and inference, but are equivocally generated by the heat of fervid tempers out of the overflowings of tumid imaginations. A man of this class is always in extremes. He cannot be a friend to liberty without calling for a community of goods, or a friend to order without taking under his protection the foulest excesses of tyranny. His admiration oscillates between the most worthless of rebels and the most worthless of oppressors; between Marten, the scandal of the High Court of Justice, and Laud, the scandal of the Star-Chamber. He can forgive any thing but temperance and impartiality. He has a certain sympathy with the violence of his opponents, as well as with that of his associates. In every furious partisan he sees either his present self or his former self, the pensioner that is, or the Jacobin that has been. But he is unable to comprehend a writer who, steadily attached to principles, is indifferent about names and badges; who judges of characters with equable severity, not altogether untinctured with cynicism, but free from the slightest touch of passion, party spirit, or caprice.

We should probably like Mr. Hallam's book more, if, instead of pointing out, with strict fidelity, the bright points and the dark spots of both parties, he had exerted himself to whitewash the one, and to blacken the other. But we should certainly prize it far less. Eulogy and invective may be had for the asking. But for cold rigid justice—the one weight and the one measure—we know not where else we can look.

No portion of our annals has been more perplexed and misrepresented by writers of different parties, than the his-

tory of the Reformation. In this labyrinth of falsehood and sophistry, the guidance of Mr. Hallam is peculiarly valuable. It is impossible not to admire the evenhanded justice with which he deals out castigation to right and left on the rival persecutors.

It is vehemently maintained by some writers of the present day, that the government of Elizabeth persecuted neither Papists nor Puritans as such; and occasionally that the severe measures which it adopted were dictated, not by religious intolerance, but by political necessity. Even the excellent account of those times, which Mr. Hallam has given, has not altogether imposed silence on the authors of this fallacy. The title of the Queen, they say, was annulled by the Pope; her throne was given to another; her subjects were incited to rebellion; her life was menaced; every Catholic was bound in conscience to be a traitor; it was therefore against traitors, not against Catholics, that the penal laws were enacted.

That our readers may be the better able to appreciate the merits of this defence, we will state, as concisely as possible, the substance of some of these laws.

As soon as Elizabeth ascended the throne, and before the least hostility to her government had been shown by the Catholic population, an act passed, prohibiting the celebration of the rites of the Romish church, on pain of forfeiture for the first offence, a year's imprisonment for the second, and perpetual imprisonment for the third.

A law was next made, in 1562, enacting that all who had ever graduated at the Universities, or received holy orders, all lawyers, and all magistrates, should take the oath of supremacy when tendered to them, on pain of forfeiture, and imprisonment during the royal pleasure. After the lapse of three months, it might again be tendered to them; and, if it were again refused, the recusant was guilty of high treason. A prospective law, however severe, framed to exclude Catholics from the liberal professions, would have been mercy itself compared with this odious act. It is a retrospective statute; it is a retrospective penal statute; it is a retrospective penal statute against a large class. We will not positively affirm that a law of this description must always, and under all circumstances, be unjustifiable. But

the presumption against it is most violent; nor do we remember any crisis, either in our own history or in the history of any other country, which would have rendered such a provision necessary. But in the present, what circumstances called for extraordinary rigour? There might be disaffection among the Catholics. The prohibition of their worship would naturally produce it. But it is from their situation, not from their conduct; from the wrongs which they had suffered, not from those which they had committed, that the existence of discontent among them must be inferred. There were libels, no doubt, and prophecies, and rumours, and suspicions; strange grounds for a law inflicting capital penalties, *ex post facto*, on a large order of men.

Eight years later, the bull of Pius deposing Elizabeth produced a third law. This law, to which alone, as we conceive, the defence now under our consideration can apply, provides, that if any Catholic shall convert a Protestant to the Romish church, they shall both suffer death, as for high treason.

We believe that we might safely content ourselves with stating the fact and leaving it to the judgment of every plain Englishman. Recent controversies have, however, given so much importance to this subject, that we will offer a few remarks on it.

In the first place, the arguments which are urged in favour of Elizabeth apply with much greater force to the case of her sister Mary. The Catholics did not, at the time of Elizabeth's accession, rise in arms to seat a pretender on her throne. But before Mary had given or could give provocation, the most distinguished Protestants attempted to set aside her rights in favour of the Lady Jane. That attempt, and the subsequent insurrection of Wyatt, furnished at least as good a plea for the burning of Protestants as the conspiracies against Elizabeth furnish for the hanging and embowelling of Papists.

The fact is, that both pleas are worthless alike. If such arguments are to pass current, it will be easy to prove that there was never such a thing as religious persecution since the creation. For there never was a religious persecution in which some odious crime was not justly or unjustly said to be obviously deducible from the doctrines of the perse-

cuted party. We might say that the Cæsars did not persecute the Christians; that they only punished men who were charged, rightly or wrongly, with burning Rome, and with committing the foulest abominations in their assemblies; that the refusal to throw frankincense on the altar of Jupiter was not the crime, but only evidence of the crime. We might say that the massacre of St. Bartholomew was intended to extirpate, not a religious sect, but a political party. For, beyond all doubt, the proceedings of the Huguenots, from the conspiracy of Amboise to the battle of Moncoutour, had given much more trouble to the French monarchy than the Catholics have ever given to England since the Reformation; and that, too, with much less excuse.

The true distinction is perfectly obvious. To punish a man because he has committed a crime, or is believed, though unjustly, to have committed a crime, is not persecution. To punish a man because we infer from the nature of some doctrine which he holds, or from the conduct of other persons who hold the same doctrines with him, that he will commit a crime, is persecution; and is, in every case, foolish and wicked.

When Elizabeth put Ballard and Babington to death, she was not persecuting. Nor should we have accused her government of persecution for passing any law, however severe, against overt acts of sedition. But to argue, that, because a man is a Catholic, he must think it right to murder an heretical sovereign, and that, because he thinks it right, he will attempt to do it, and then to found on this conclusion a law for punishing him as if he had done it, is plain persecution.

If, indeed, all men reasoned in the same manner on the same data, and always did what they thought it their duty to do, this mode of dispensing punishment might be extremely judicious. But as people who agree about premises often disagree about conclusions, and as no man in the world acts up to his own standard of right, there are two enormous gaps in the logic by which alone penalties for opinions can be defended. The doctrine of reprobation, in the judgment of many very able men, follows by syllogistic necessity from the doctrine of election. Others conceive that the Antinomian and Manichean heresies directly follow from

the doctrine of reprobation; and it is very generally thought that licentiousness and cruelty of the worst description are likely to be the fruits, as they often have been the fruits, of Antinomian and Manichean opinions. This chain of reasoning, we think, is as perfect in all its parts as that which makes out a Papist to be necessarily a traitor. Yet it would be rather a strong measure to hang the Calvinists, on the ground that if they were spared, they would infallibly commit all the atrocities of Matthias and Knipperdoling. For, reason the matter as we may, experience shows us that a man may believe in election without believing in reprobation, that he may believe in reprobation without being an Antinomian, and that he may be an Antinomian without being a bad citizen. Man, in short, is so inconsistent a creature, that it is impossible to reason from his belief to his conduct, or from one part of his belief to another.

We do not believe that every Englishman who was reconciled to the Catholic church would, as a necessary consequence, have thought himself justified in deposing or assassinating Elizabeth. It is not sufficient to say that the convert must have acknowledged the authority of the Pope; and that the Pope had issued a bull against the Queen. We know through what strange loopholes the human mind contrives to escape, when it wishes to avoid a disagreeable inference from an admitted proposition. We know how long the Jansenists contrived to believe the Pope infallible in matters of doctrine, and at the same time to believe doctrines which he pronounced to be heretical. Let it pass, however, that every Catholic in the kingdom thought that Elizabeth might be lawfully murdered. Still the old maxim, that what is the business of everybody is the business of nobody, is particularly likely to hold good in a case in which a cruel death is the almost inevitable consequence of making any attempt.

Of the ten thousand clergymen of the Church of England, there is scarcely one who would not say, that a man who should leave his country and friends to preach the gospel among savages, and who should, after labouring indefatigably, without any hope of reward, terminate his life by martyrdom, would deserve the warmest admiration. Yet we doubt whether ten of the ten thousand ever thought of going on

such an expedition. Why should we suppose that conscientious motives, feeble as they are constantly found to be in a good cause, should be omnipotent for evil? Doubtless there was many a jolly Popish priest in the old manor-houses of the northern counties, who would have admitted, in theory, the deposing power of the Pope, but who would not have been ambitious to be stretched on the rack, even though it were to be used, according to the benevolent proviso of Lord Burleigh, "as charitably as such a thing can be;" or to be hanged, drawn, and quartered, even though, by that rare indulgence which the Queen, of her especial grace, certain knowledge, and mere motion, sometimes extended to very mitigated cases, he were allowed a fair time to choke before the hangman began to grabble in his entrails.

But the laws passed against the Puritans had not even the wretched excuse which we have been considering. In their case, the cruelty was equal; the danger infinitely less. In fact, the danger was created solely by the cruelty. But it is superfluous to press the argument. By no artifice of ingenuity can the stigma of persecution, the worst blemish of the English Church, be effaced or patched over. Her doctrines, we well know, do not tend to intolerance. She admits the possibility of salvation out of her own pale. But this circumstance, in itself honourable to her, aggravates the sin and the shame of those who persecuted in her name. Dominic and De Monfort did not at least murder and torture for differences of opinion which they considered as trifling. It was to stop an infection which, as they believed, hurried to perdition every soul which it seized, that they employed their fire and steel. The measures of the English government with respect to the Papists and Puritans sprang from a widely different principle. If those who deny that the supporters of the Established Church were guilty of religious persecution, mean only that they were not influenced by religious motives, we perfectly agree with them. Neither the penal code of Elizabeth, nor the more hateful system by which Charles the Second attempted to force Episcopacy on the Scotch, had an origin so noble. Their cause is to be sought in some circumstances which attended the Reformation in England—circumstances of which the effects long continued

to be felt, and may in some degree be traced even at the present day.

In Germany, in France, in Switzerland, and in Scotland, the contest against the Papal power was essentially a religious contest. In all these countries, indeed, the cause of the Reformation, like every other great cause, attracted to itself many supporters, influenced by no conscientious principle, many who quitted the Established Church only because they thought her in danger, many who were weary of her restraints, and many who were greedy for her spoils. But it was not by these adherents that the separation was there conducted. They were welcome auxiliaries; their support was too often purchased by unworthy compliances; but, however exalted in rank or power, they were not the leaders in the enterprise. Men of a widely different description, men who redeemed great infirmities and errors by sincerity, disinterestedness, energy, and courage; men who, with many of the vices of revolutionary chiefs and of polemic divines, united some of the highest qualities of apostles, were the real directors. They might be violent in innovation, and scurrilous in controversy. They might sometimes act with inexcusable severity towards opponents, and sometimes connive disreputably at the vices of powerful allies. But fear was not in them, nor hypocrisy, nor avarice, nor any petty selfishness. Their one great object was the demolition of the idols, and the purification of the sanctuary. If they were too indulgent to the feelings of eminent men, from whose patronage they expected advantage to the church, they never flinched before persecuting tyrants and hostile armies. If they set the lives of others at naught in comparison of their doctrines, they were equally ready to throw away their own. Such were the authors of the great schism on the Continent and in the northern part of this island. The Elector of Saxony and the Landgrave of Hesse, the Prince of Condé and the King of Navarre, Moray and Morton, might espouse the Protestant opinions, or might pretend to espouse them; but it was from Luther, from Calvin, from Knox, that the Reformation took its character.

England has no such names to show; not that she wanted men of sincere piety, or deep learning, of steady and adventurous courage. But these were thrown into the back-

ground. Elsewhere men of this character were the principals. Here they acted a secondary part. Elsewhere worldliness was the tool of zeal. Here zeal was the tool of worldliness. A king, whose character may be best described by saying that he was despotism itself personified, unprincipled ministers, a rapacious aristocracy, a servile parliament—such were the instruments by which England was delivered from the yoke of Rome. The work which had been begun by Henry, the murderer of his wives, was continued by Somerset, the murderer of his brother, and completed by Elizabeth, the murderer of her guest. Sprung from brutal passion, nurtured by selfish policy, the Reformation in England displayed little of what had in other countries distinguished it—unflinching and unsparing devotion, boldness of speech, and singleness of eye. These were indeed to be found; but it was in the lower ranks of the party which opposed the authority of Rome, in such men as Hooper, Latimer, Rodgers, and Taylor. Of those who had any important share in bringing the alteration about, the excellent Ridley was perhaps the only person who did not consider it as a mere political job. Even Ridley did not play a very prominent part. Among the statesmen and prelates who principally gave the tone to the religious changes, there is one, and one only, whose conduct partiality itself can attribute to any other than interested motives. It is not strange, therefore, that his character should have been the subject of fierce controversy. We need not say that we speak of Cranmer.

Mr. Hallam has been severely censured for saying, with his usual placid severity, that, "if we weigh the character of this prelate in an equal balance, he will appear far indeed removed from the turpitude imputed to him by his enemies; yet not entitled to any extraordinary veneration." We will venture to expand the sense of Mr. Hallam, and to comment on it thus: If we consider Cranmer merely as a statesman, he will not appear a much worse man than Wolsey, Gardiner, Cromwell, or Somerset. But when an attempt is made to set him up as a saint, it is scarcely possible for any man of sense, who knows the history of the times well, to preserve his gravity. If the memory of the archbishop had

been left to find its own place, he would soon have been lost among the crowd which is mingled

> "A quel cattivo coro
> Degli' angeli, che non furon ribelli,
> Nè fur fedeli a Dio, ma per se furo."

And the only notice which it would have been necessary to take of his name, would have been

> "Non ragioniam di lui; ma guarda, e passa."

But when his admirers challenge for him a place in the noble army of martyrs, his claims require fuller discussion.

The shameful origin of his history, common enough in the scandalous chronicles of courts, seems strangely out of place in a hagiology. Cranmer rose into favour by serving Henry in a disgraceful affair of his first divorce. He promoted the marriage of Anne Boleyn with the king. On a frivolous pretence, he pronounced it null and void. On a pretence, if possible, still more frivolous, he dissolved the ties which bound the shameless tyrant to Anne of Cleves. He attached himself to Cromwell, while the fortunes of Cromwell flourished. He voted for cutting off his head without a trial, when the tide of royal favour turned. He conformed backwards and forwards as the king changed his mind. While Henry lived, he assisted in condemning to the flames those who denied the doctrine of transubstantiation. When Henry died, he found out that the doctrine was false. He was, however, not at a loss for people to burn. The authority of his station, and of his gray hairs, was employed to overcome the disgust with which an intelligent and virtuous child regarded persecution.

Intolerance is always bad. But the sanguinary intolerance of a man who thus wavered in his creed, excites a loathing to which it is difficult to give vent without calling foul names. Equally false to political and to religious obligations, he was first the tool of Somerset, and then the tool of Northumberland. When the former wished to put his own brother to death, without even the form of a trial, he found a ready instrument in Cranmer. In spite of the canon

law, which forbade a churchman to take any part in matters of blood, the archbishop signed the warrant for the atrocious sentence. When Somerset had been in his turn destroyed, his destroyer received the support of Cranmer in his attempt to change the course of the succession.

The apology made for him by his admirers only renders his conduct more contemptible. He complied, it is said, against his better judgment, because he could not resist the entreaties of Edward. A holy prelate of sixty, one would think, might be better employed by the bedside of a dying child, than committing crimes at the request of his disciple. If he had shown half as much firmness when Edward requested him to commit treason, as he had before shown when Edward requested him not to commit murder, he might have saved the country from one of the greatest misfortunes that it ever underwent. He became, from whatever motive, the accomplice of the worthless Dudley. The virtuous scruples of another young and amiable mind were to be overcome. As Edward had been forced into persecution, Jane was to be seduced into usurpation. No transaction in our annals is more unjustifiable than this. If an hereditary title were to be respected, Mary possessed it. If a parliamentary title were preferable, Mary possessed that also. If the interest of the Protestant religion required a departure from the ordinary rule of succession, that interest would have been best served by raising Elizabeth to the throne. If the foreign relations of the kingdom were considered, still stronger reasons might be found for preferring Elizabeth to Jane. There was great doubt whether Jane or the Queen of Scotland had the better claim; and that doubt would, in all probability, have produced a war, both with Scotland and with France, if the project of Northumberland had not been blasted in its infancy. That Elizabeth had a better claim than the Queen of Scotland was indisputable. To the part which Cranmer, and unfortunately some better men than Cranmer, took in this most reprehensible scheme, much of the severity with which the Protestants were afterwards treated must in fairness be ascribed.

The plot failed; popery triumphed; and Cranmer recanted. Most people look on his recantation as a single blemish on an honourable life, the frailty of an unguarded

moment. But, in fact, it was in strict accordance with the system on which he had constantly acted. It was part of a regular habit. It was not the first recantation that he had made; and, in all probability, if it had answered its purpose, it would not have been the last. We do not blame him for not choosing to be burned alive. It is no very severe reproach to any person, that he does not possess heroic fortitude. But surely a man who liked the fire so little, should have had some sympathy for others. A persecutor who inflicts nothing which he is not ready to endure, deserves some respect. But when a man, who loves his doctrines more than the lives of his neighbours, loves his own little finger better than his doctrines, a very simple argument, *a fortiori*, will enable us to estimate the amount of his benevolence.

But his martyrdom, it is said, redeemed every thing. It is extraordinary that so much ignorance should exist on this subject. The fact is, that if a martyr be a man who chooses to die rather than to renounce his opinions, Cranmer was no more a martyr than Dr. Dodd. He died solely because he could not help it. He never retracted his recantation till he found he had made it in vain. The queen was fully resolved that, Catholic or Protestant, he should burn. Then he spoke out, as people generally speak out when they are at the point of death, and have nothing to hope or to fear on earth. If Mary had suffered him to live, we suspect that he would have heard mass, and received absolution, like a good Catholic, till the accession of Elizabeth; and that he would then have purchased, by another apostasy, the power of burning men better and braver than himself.

We do not mean, however, to represent him as a monster of wickedness. He was not wantonly cruel or treacherous. He was merely a supple, timid, interested courtier, in times of frequent and violent change. That which has always been represented as his distinguishing virtue, the facility with which he forgave his enemies, belongs to the character. Those of his class are never vindictive, and never grateful. A present interest effaces past services and past injuries from their minds together. Their only object is self-preservation; and for this they conciliate those who wrong them, just as they abandon those who serve them. Before we

extol a man for his forgiving temper, we should inquire whether he is above revenge, or below it.

Somerset, with as little principle as his coadjutor, had a firmer and more commanding mind. Of Henry, an orthodox Catholic, excepting that he chose to be his own pope, and of Elizabeth, who certainly had no objection to the theology of Rome, we need say nothing. But these four persons were the great authors of the English Reformation. Three of them had a direct interest in the extension of the royal prerogative. The fourth was the ready tool of any who could frighten him. It is not difficult to see from what motives, and on what plan, such persons would be inclined to remodel the Church. The scheme was merely to rob the Babylonian enchantress of her ornaments, to transfer the full cup of her sorceries to other hands, spilling as little as possible by the way. The Catholic doctrines and rites were to be retained in the Church of England; but the king was to exercise the control which formerly belonged to the Roman pontiff. In this, Henry for a time succeeded. The extraordinary force of his character, the fortunate situation in which he stood with respect to foreign powers, and the vast resources which the suppression of the monasteries placed at his disposal, enabled him to oppress both the religious factions equally. He punished with impartial severity those who renounced the doctrines of Rome, and those who acknowledged her jurisdiction. The basis, however, on which he attempted to establish his power, was too narrow. It would have been impossible even for him long to persecute both persuasions. Even under his reign there had been insurrections on the part of the Catholics, and signs of a spirit which was likely soon to produce insurrection on the part of the Protestants. It was plainly necessary, therefore, that the government should form an alliance with one or the other side. To recognise the Papal supremacy, would have been to abandon its whole design. Reluctantly and sullenly it at last joined the Protestants. In forming this junction, its object was to procure as much aid as possible for its selfish undertaking, and to make the smallest possible concessions to the spirit of religious innovation.

From this compromise the Church of England sprung. In many respects, indeed, it has been well for her, that in

an age of exuberant zeal, her principal founders were mere politicians. To this circumstance she owes her moderate articles, her decent ceremonies, her noble and pathetic liturgy. Her worship is not disfigured by mummery; yet she has preserved, in a far greater degree than any of her Protestant sisters, that art of striking the senses and filling the imagination in which the Catholic Church so eminently excels. But, on the other hand, she continued to be, for more than a hundred and fifty years, the servile handmaid of monarchy, the steady enemy of public liberty. The divine right of kings and the duty of passively obeying all their commands, were her favourite tenets. She held them firmly through times of oppression, persecution, and licentiousness, while law was trampled down, while judgment was perverted, while the people were eaten as though they were bread. Once, and but once—for a moment, and but for a moment—when her own dignity and property were touched, she forgot to practise the submission which she had taught.

Elizabeth clearly discerned the advantages which were to be derived from a close connection between the monarchy and the priesthood. At the time of her accession, indeed, she evidently meditated a partial reconciliation with Rome; and throughout her whole life, she leaned strongly to some of the most obnoxious parts of the Catholic system. But her imperious temper, her keen sagacity, and her peculiar situation, soon led her to attach herself completely to a church which was all her own. On the same principle on which she joined it, she attempted to drive all her people within its pale by persecution. She supported it by severe penal laws, not because she thought conformity to its discipline necessary to salvation, but because it was the fastness which arbitrary power was making strong for itself; because she expected a more profound obedience from those who saw in her both their civil and their ecclesiastical head, than from those who, like the Papists, ascribed spiritual authority to the Pope; or from those who, like some of the Puritans, ascribed it only to Heaven. To dissent from her establishment was to dissent from an institution founded with an express view to the maintenance and extension of the royal prerogative.

This great queen and her successors, by considering conformity and loyalty as identical, at length made them so. With respect to the Catholics, indeed, the rigour of persecution abated after her death. James soon found that they were unable to injure him; and that the animosity which the Puritan party felt towards them, drove them of necessity to take refuge under his throne. During the subsequent conflict, their fault was any thing but disloyalty. On the other hand, James hated the Puritans with far more than the hatred of Elizabeth. Her aversion to them was political; his was personal. The sect had plagued him in Scotland, where he was weak; and he was determined to be even with them in England, where he was powerful. Persecution gradually changed a sect into a faction. That there was any thing in the religious opinions of the Puritans which rendered them hostile to monarchy, has never been proved to our satisfaction. After our civil contests, it became the fashion to say that Presbyterianism was connected with republicanism; just as it has been the fashion to say, since the time of the French revolution, that infidelity is connected with republicanism. It is perfectly true, that a church constituted on the Calvinistic model will not strengthen the hands of the sovereign so much as a hierarchy, which consists of several ranks, differing in dignity and emolument, and of which all the members are constantly looking to the government for promotion. But experience has clearly shown that a Calvinistic church, like every other church, is disaffected when it is persecuted, quiet when it is tolerated, and actively loyal when it is favoured and cherished. Scotland has had a Presbyterian establishment during a century and a half; yet her General Assembly has not, during that period, given half so much trouble to the government as the Convocation of the Church of England gave to it during the thirty years which followed the Revolution. That James and Charles should have been mistaken on this point, is not surprising. But we are astonished, we must confess, when writers of our own time, men who have before them the proof of what toleration can effect, men who may see with their own eyes that the Presbyterians are no such monsters when government is wise enough to let them alone, should defend the old persecutions, on the ground that

they were indispensable to the safety of the church and the throne.

How persecution protects churches and thrones was soon made manifest. A systematic political opposition, vehement, daring, and inflexible, sprang from a schism about trifles, altogether unconnected with the real interests of religion or of the state. Before the close of the reign of Elizabeth it began to show itself. It broke forth on the question of the monopolies. Even the imperial lioness was compelled to abandon her prey, and slowly and fiercely to recede before the assailants. The spirit of liberty grew with the growing wealth and intelligence of the people. The feeble struggles and insults of James irritated instead of suppressing it; and the events which immediately followed the accession of his son, portended a contest of no common severity, between a king resolved to be absolute, and a people resolved to be free.

The famous proceedings of the third parliament of Charles, and the tyrannical measures which followed its dissolution, are extremely well described by Mr. Hallam. No writer, we think, has shown in so clear and satisfactory a manner, that at that time the government entertained a fixed purpose of destroying the old parliamentary constitution of England, or at least of reducing it to a mere shadow. We hasten, however, to a part of his work, which, though it abounds in valuable information, and in remarks well deserving to be attentively considered; and though it is, like the rest, evidently written in a spirit of perfect impartiality, appears to us, in many points, objectionable.

We pass to the year 1640. The fate of the short parliament held in that year already indicated the views of the king. That a parliament so moderate in feeling should have met after so many years of oppression, is truly wonderful. Hyde extols its loyal and conciliatory spirit; its conduct, we are told, made the excellent Falkland in love with the very name of parliament. We think, indeed, with Oliver St. John, that its moderation was carried too far, and that the times required sharper and more decided councils. It was fortunate, however, that the king had another opportunity of showing that hatred of the liberties of his subjects which was the ruling principle of all his conduct. The sole

crime of this assembly was that, meeting after a long intermission of parliaments, and after a long series of cruelties and illegal imposts, they seemed inclined to examine grievances before they would vote supplies. For this insolence, they were dissolved almost as soon as they met.

Defeat, universal agitation, financial embarrassments, disorganization in every part of the government, compelled Charles again to convene the houses before the close of the same year. Their meeting was one of the great eras in the history of the civilized world. Whatever of political freedom exists either in Europe or in America, has sprung, directly or indirectly, from those institutions which they secured and reformed. We never turn to the annals of those times, without feeling increased admiration of the patriotism, the energy, the decision, the consummate wisdom, which marked the measures of that great parliament, from the day on which it met, to the commencement of civil hostilities.

The impeachment of Strafford was the first, and perhaps the greatest blow. The whole conduct of that celebrated man proved that he had formed a deliberate scheme to subvert the fundamental laws of England. Those parts of his correspondence which have been brought to light since his death, place the matter beyond a doubt. One of his admirers has, indeed, offered to show, "that the passages which Mr. Hallam has invidiously extracted from the correspondence between Laud and Strafford, as proving their design to introduce a thorough tyranny, refer not to any such design, but to a thorough reform in the affairs of state, and the thorough maintenance of just authority!" We will recommend two or three of these passages to the especial notice of our readers.

All who know any thing of those times know that the conduct of Hampden in the affair of the ship-money met with the warm approbation of every respectable royalist in England. It drew forth the ardent eulogies of the champions of the prerogative, and even of the crown lawyers themselves. Clarendon allows his demeanour through the whole proceeding to have been such, that even those who watched for an occasion against the defender of the people, were compelled to acknowledge themselves unable to find

any fault in him. That he was right in the point of law, is now universally admitted. Even had it been otherwise, he had a fair case. Five of the judges, servile as our courts then were, pronounced in his favour. The majority against him was the smallest possible. In no country retaining the slightest vestige of constitutional liberty, can a modest and decent appeal to the laws be treated as a crime. Strafford, however, recommends that, for taking the sense of a legal tribunal on a legal question, Hampden should be punished, and punished severely—"whipt," says the insolent apostate, "whipt into his senses. If the rod," he adds, "be so used that it smarts not, I am the more sorry." This is the maintenance of just authority.

In civilized nations, the most arbitrary governments have generally suffered justice to have a free course in private suits. Strafford wished to make every cause in every court subject to the royal prerogative. He complained, that in Ireland he was not permitted to meddle in cases between party and party. "I know very well," says he, "that the common lawyers will be passionately against it, who are wont to put such a prejudice upon all other professions, as if none were to be trusted, or capable to administer justice but themselves; yet how well this suits with monarchy, when they monopolize all to be governed by their year-books, you in England have a costly example." We are really curious to know by what arguments it is to be proved, that the power of interfering in the lawsuits of individuals is part of the just authority of the executive government.

It is not strange that a man so careless of the common civil rights, which even despots have generally respected, should treat with scorn the limitations which the constitution imposes on the royal prerogative. We might quote pages; but we will content ourselves with a single specimen: "The debts of the Crown being taken off, *you may govern as you please;* and most resolute I am that may be done without borrowing any help forth of the king's lodgings."

Such was the theory of that thorough reform in the state which Strafford meditated. His whole practice, from the day on which he sold himself to the court, was in strict conformity to his theory. For his accomplices, various ex-

cuses may be urged: ignorance, imbecility, religious bigotry. But Wentworth had no such plea. His intellect was capacious. His early prepossessions were on the side of popular rights. He knew the whole beauty and value of the system which he attempted to deface. He was the first of the Rats; the first of those statesmen whose patriotism has been only the coquetry of political prostitution; whose profligacy has taught governments to adopt the old maxim of the slave-market, that it is cheaper to buy than to breed, to import defenders from an opposition, than to rear them in a ministry. He was the first Englishman to whom a peerage was not an addition of honour, but a sacrament of infamy —a baptism into the communion of corruption. As he was the earliest of the hateful list, so was he also by far the greatest—eloquent, sagacious, adventurous, intrepid, ready of invention, immutable of purpose, in every talent which exalts or destroys nations, pre-eminent, the lost Archangel, the Satan of the apostasy. The title for which, at the time of his desertion, he exchanged a name honourably distinguished in the cause of the people, reminds us of the appellation which, from the moment of the first treason, fixed itself on the fallen Son of the Morning—

> "So call him now.—His former name
> Is heard no more in heaven."

The defection of Strafford from the popular party contributed mainly to draw on him the hatred of his contemporaries. It has since made him an object of peculiar interest to those whose lives have been spent, like his, in proving that there is no malice like the malice of a renegade. Nothing can be more natural or becoming, than that one turncoat should eulogize another.

Many enemies of public liberty have been distinguished by their private virtues. But Strafford was the same throughout. As was the statesman, such was the kinsman, and such the lover. His conduct towards Lord Mountmorris is recorded by Clarendon. For a word which can scarcely be called rash, which could not have been made the subject of an ordinary civil action, he dragged a man of high rank, married to a relative of that saint about whom he whimpered to the Peers, before a tribunal of his slaves. Sentence

of death was passed. Every thing but death was inflicted. Yet the treatment which Lord Ely experienced was still more disgusting. That nobleman was thrown into prison, in order to compel him to settle his estate in a manner agreeable to his daughter-in-law, whom, as there is every reason to believe, Strafford had debauched. These stories do not rest on vague report. The historians most partial to the minister admit their truth, and censure them in terms which, though too lenient for the occasion, are still severe. These facts are alone sufficient to justify the appellation with which Pym branded him—"the wicked earl."

In spite of all his vices, in spite of all his dangerous projects, Strafford was certainly entitled to the benefit of the law; but of the law in all its rigour; of the law according to the utmost strictness of the letter which killeth. He was not to be torn in pieces by a mob, or stabbed in the back by an assassin. He was not to have punishment meted out to him from his own iniquitous measure. But if justice, in the whole range of its wide armory, contained one weapon which could pierce him, that weapon his pursuers were bound, before God and man, to employ.

> "If he may
> Find mercy in the law, 'tis his: if none,
> Let him not seek 't of us."

Such was the language which the Parliament might justly use.

Did then the articles against Strafford strictly amount to high treason? Many people, who know neither what the articles were nor what high treason is, will answer in the negative, simply because the accused person, speaking for his life, took that ground of defence. The Journals of the Lords show that the judges were consulted. They answered with one accord, that the articles on which the earl was convicted amounted to high treason. This judicial opinion, even if we suppose it to have been erroneous, goes far to justify the Parliament. The judgment pronounced in the Exchequer Chamber, has always been urged by the apologists of Charles in defence of his conduct respecting ship-money. Yet on that occasion there was but a bare

majority in favour of the party at whose pleasure all the magistrates composing the tribunal were removable. The decision in the case of Strafford was unanimous; as far as we can judge, it was unbiased; and though there may be room for hesitation, we think, on the whole, that it was reasonable. "It may be remarked," says Mr. Hallam, "that the fifteenth article of the impeachment, charging Strafford with raising money by his own authority, and quartering troops on the people of Ireland, in order to compel their obedience to his unlawful requisitions, upon which, and upon one other article, not upon the whole matter, the Peers voted him guilty, does, at least, approach very nearly, if we may not say more, to a substantive treason within the statute of Edward III., as a levying of war against the king." This most sound and just exposition has provoked a very ridiculous reply. "It should seem to be an Irish construction this," says an assailant of Mr. Hallam, "which makes the raising money for the king's service, with his knowledge, and by his approbation, to come under the head of levying war on the king, and therefore to be high treason." Now, people who undertake to write on points of constitutional law should know, what every attorney's clerk and every forward school-boy on an upper form knows, that, by a fundamental maxim of our polity, the king can do no wrong; that every court is bound to suppose his conduct and his sentiments to be, on every occasion, such as they ought to be; and that no evidence can be received for the purpose of setting aside this loyal and salutary presumption. The Lords, therefore, were bound to take it for granted, that the king considered arms which were unlawfully directed against his people, as directed against his own throne.

The remarks of Mr. Hallam on the bill of attainder, though, as usual, weighty and acute, do not perfectly satisfy us. He defends the principle, but objects to the severity of the punishment. That, on great emergencies, the state may justifiably pass a retrospective act against an offender, we have no doubt whatever. We are acquainted with only one argument on the other side, which has in it enough of reason to bear an answer. Warning, it is said, is the end of punishment. But a punishment inflicted, not by a gene-

ral rule, but by an arbitrary discretion, cannot serve the purpose of a warning; it is therefore useless; and useless pain ought not to be inflicted. This sophism has found its way into several books on penal legislation. It admits, however, of a very simple refutation. In the first place, punishments *ex post facto* are not altogether useless, even as warnings. They are warnings to a particular class, which stands in great need of warnings—to favourites and ministers. They remind persons of this description, that there may be a day of reckoning for those who ruin and enslave their country in all the forms of law. But this is not all. Warning is, in ordinary cases, the principal end of punishment; but it is not the only end. To remove the offender, to preserve society from those dangers which are to be apprehended from his incorrigible depravity, is often one of the ends. In the case of such a knave as Wild, or such a ruffian as Thurtell, it is a very important end. In the case of a powerful and wicked statesman, it is infinitely more important; so important, as alone to justify the utmost severity, even though it were certain that his fate would not deter others from imitating his example. At present, indeed, we should think it extremely pernicious to take such a course, even with a worse minister than Strafford, if a worse could exist; for, at present, Parliament has only to withhold its support from a cabinet to produce an immediate change of hands. The case was widely different in the reign of Charles the First. That prince had governed for seven years without any Parliament; and even when Parliament was sitting, had supported Buckingham against its most violent remonstrances.

Mr. Hallam is of opinion that a bill of pains and penalties ought to have been passed against Strafford; but he draws a distinction less just, we think, than his distinctions usually are. His opinion, so far as we can collect it, is this; that there are almost insurmountable objections to retrospective laws for capital punishment; but that where the punishment stops short of death, the objections are comparatively trifling. Now the practice of taking the severity of the penalty into consideration, when the question is about the mode of procedure and the rules of evidence, is no

doubt sufficiently common. We often see a man convicted of a simple larceny, on evidence on which he would not be convicted of a burglary. It sometimes happens that a jury, when there is strong suspicion, but not absolute demonstration, that an act, unquestionably amounting to murder, was committed by the prisoner before them, will find him guilty of manslaughter; but this is surely very irrational. The rules of evidence no more depend on the magnitude of the interests at stake, than the rules of arithmetic. We might as well say, that we have a greater chance of throwing a size when we are playing for a penny than when we are playing for a thousand pounds, as that a form of trial which is sufficient for the purposes of justice, in a matter affecting liberty and property, is insufficient in a matter affecting life. Nay, if a mode of proceeding be too lax for capital cases, it is, *a fortiori*, too lax for all others; for, in capital cases, the principles of human nature will always afford considerable security. No judge is so cruel as he who indemnifies himself for scrupulosity in cases of blood, by license in affairs of smaller importance. The difference in tale on the one side far more than makes up for the difference in weight on the other.

If there be any universal objection to retrospective punishment, there is no more to be said. But such is not the opinion of Mr. Hallam. He approves of the mode of proceeding. He thinks that a punishment not previously affixed by law to the offences of Strafford, should have been inflicted; that he should have been degraded from his rank, and condemned to perpetual banishment, by act of Parliament; but he sees strong objections to the taking away of his life. Our difficulty would have been at the first step, and there only. Indeed, we can scarcely conceive that any case, which does not call for capital punishment, can call for retrospective punishment. We can scarcely conceive a man so wicked and so dangerous, that the whole course of law must be disturbed in order to reach him, yet not so wicked as to deserve the severest sentence, nor so dangerous as to require the last and surest custody—that of the grave. If we had thought that Strafford might be safely suffered to live in France, we should have thought it better that he should continue to live in England, than that he should be

exiled by a special act. As to degradation, it was not the earl, but the general and the statesman, whom the people had to fear. Essex said, on that occasion, with more truth than eloquence, "Stone-dead hath no fellow." And often during the civil wars the Parliament had reason to rejoice that an irreversible law and an impassable barrier protected them from the valour and capacity of Strafford.

It is remarkable that neither Hyde nor Falkland voted against the bill of attainder. There is, indeed, reason to believe that Falkland spoke in favour of it. In one respect, as Mr. Hallam has observed, the proceeding was honourably distinguished from others of the same kind. An act was passed to relieve the children of Strafford from the forfeiture and corruption of blood, which were the legal consequences of the sentence. The crown had never shown equal generosity in a case of treason. The liberal conduct of the Commons has been fully and most appropriately repaid. The house of Wentworth has since been as much distinguished by public spirit as by power and splendour; and may at the present time boast of members, with whom Say and Hampden would have been proud to act.

It is somewhat curious that the admirers of Strafford should also be, without a single exception, the admirers of Charles; for whatever we may think of the conduct of the Parliament towards the unhappy favourite, there can be no doubt that the treatment which he received from his master was disgraceful. Faithless alike to his people and his tools, the King did not scruple to play the part of the cowardly approver, who hangs his accomplice. It is good that there should be such men as Charles in every league of villany. It is for such men that the offers of pardon and reward, which appear after a murder, are intended. They are indemnified, remunerated, and despised. The very magistrate who avails himself of their assistance, looks on them as wretches more degraded than the criminal whom they betray. Was Strafford innocent? was he a meritorious servant of the Crown? If so, what shall we think of the prince, who, having solemnly promised him that not a hair of his head should be hurt, and possessing an unquestioned constitutional right to save him, gave him up to the vengeance of his enemies? There were some points which we know that Charles would

not concede, and for which he was willing to risk the chances of civil war. Ought not a king, who will make a stand for any thing, to make a stand for the innocent blood? Was Strafford guilty? Even on this supposition, it is difficult not to feel disdain for the partner of his guilt—the tempter turned punisher. If, indeed, from that time forth, the conduct of Charles had been blameless, it might have been said that his eyes were at last opened to the errors of his former conduct, and that, in sacrificing to the wishes of his Parliament a minister whose crime had been a devotion too zealous to the interests of his prerogative, he gave a painful and deeply humiliating proof of the sincerity of his repentance. We may describe his behaviour on this occasion in terms resembling those which Hume has employed, when speaking of the conduct of Churchill at the Revolution. It required ever after the most rigid justice and sincerity in his dealings with his people to vindicate it. His subsequent dealings with his people, however, clearly showed, that it was not from any respect for the constitution, or from any sense of the deep criminality of the plans in which Strafford and himself had been engaged, that he gave up his minister to the axe. It became evident that he had abandoned a servant who, deeply guilty as to all others, was guiltless to him alone, solely in order to gain time for maturing other schemes of tyranny, and purchasing the aid of other Wentworths. He who would not avail himself of the power which the laws gave him to save a friend, to whom his honour was pledged, soon showed that he did not scruple to break every law and forfeit every pledge, in orden to work the ruin of his opponents.

"Put not your trust in princes!" was the expression of the fallen minister, when he heard that Charles had consented to his death. The whole history of the times is a sermon on that bitter text. The defence of the Long Parliament is comprised in the dying words of its victim.

The early measures of that Parliament, Mr. Hallam in general approves. But he considers the proceedings which took place after the recess in the summer of 1641, as mischievous and violent. He thinks that, from that time, the demands of the Houses were not warranted by any imminent danger to the constitution, and that in the war which ensued they were clearly the aggressors. As this is one of

the most interesting questions in our history, we will venture to state, at some length, the reasons which have led us to form an opinion on it contrary to that of a writer whose judgment we so highly respect.

We will premise, that we think worse of King Charles the First than even Mr. Hallam appears to do. The fixed hatred of liberty, which was the principle of all his public conduct; the unscrupulousness with which he adopted any means which might enable him to attain his ends; the readiness with which he gave promises; the impudence with which he broke them; the cruel indifference with which he threw away his useless or damaged tools, rendered him, at least till his character was fully exposed and his power shaken to its foundations, a more dangerous enemy to the constitution, than a man of far greater talents and resolutions might have been. Such princes may still be seen—the scandals of the southern thrones of Europe; princes false alike to the accomplices who have served them, and to the opponents who have spared them; princes who, in the hour of danger, concede every thing, swear every thing, hold out their cheeks to every smiter, give up to punishment every minister of their tyranny, and await with meek and smiling implacability the blessed day of perjury and proscription.

We will pass by the instances of oppression and falsehood which disgraced the early years of the reign of Charles. We will leave out of the question the whole history of his third Parliament, the price which he exacted for assenting to the Petition of Right, the perfidy with which he violated his engagements, the death of Eliot—the barbarous punishments inflicted by the Star Chamber, the ship-money, and all the measures, now universally condemned, which disgraced his administration from 1630 to 1640. We will admit, that it might be the duty of the Parliament, after punishing the most guilty of his creatures, after abolishing the inquisitorial tribunals, which had been the instruments of his tyranny, after reversing the unjust sentences of his victims, to pause in its course. The concessions which had been made were great, the evils of civil war obvious, the advantages even of victory doubtful. The former errors of the king might be imputed to youth, to the pressure of circumstances, to the influence of evil counsel, to the undefined state of the law.

We firmly believe, that if, even at this eleventh hour, Charles had acted fairly towards his people, if he had even acted fairly towards his own partisans, the House of Commons would have given him a fair chance of retrieving the public confidence. Such was the opinion of Clarendon. He distinctly states, that the fury of opposition had abated; that a reaction had begun to take place; that the majority of those who had taken part against the king were desirous of an honourable and complete reconciliation; and that the more violent, or, as it soon appeared, the more judicious members of the party, were fast declining in credit. The remonstrance had been carried with great difficulty. The uncompromising antagonists of the court, such as Cromwell, had begun to talk of selling their estates and leaving England. The event soon showed, that they were the only men who really understood how much inhumanity and fraud lay hid under the constitutional language and gracious demeanour of the king.

The attempt to seize the five members was undoubtedly the real cause of the war. From that moment, the loyal confidence with which most of the popular party were beginning to regard the king, was turned into hatred and incurable suspicion. From that moment, the Parliament was compelled to surround itself with defensive arms; from that moment the city assumed the appearance of a garrison; from that moment it was that, in the phrase of Clarendon, the carriage of Hampden became fiercer, that he drew the sword and threw away the scabbard. For, from that moment, it must have been evident to every impartial observer, that in the midst of professions, oaths, and smiles, the tyrant was constantly looking forward to an absolute sway, and to bloody revenge.

The advocates of Charles have very dexterously contrived to conceal from their readers the real nature of this transaction. By making concessions apparently candid and ample, they elude the great accusation. They allow that the measure was weak, and even frantic, an absurd caprice of Lord Digby, absurdly adopted by the king. And thus they save their client from the full penalty of his transgression, by entering a plea of guilty to the minor offence. To us his conduct appears at this day, as at the time it appeared to the Parliament and the city. We think it by no means so

foolish as it pleases his friends to represent it, and far more wicked.

In the first place, the transaction was illegal from beginning to end. The impeachment was illegal. The process was illegal. The service was illegal. If Charles wished to prosecute the five members for treason, a bill against them should have been sent to a grand jury. That a commoner cannot be tried for high treason by the Lords at the suit of the crown, is part of the very alphabet of our law. That no man can be arrested by a message or a verbal summons of the king, with or without a warrant from a responsible magistrate, is equally clear. This was an established maxim of our jurisprudence in the time of Edward the Fourth. "A subject," said Chief Justice Markham to that prince, "may arrest for treason: the king cannot; for if the arrest be illegal, the party has no remedy against the king."

The time at which Charles took this step also deserves consideration. We have already said, that the ardour which the Parliament had displayed at the time of its first meeting had considerably abated; that the leading opponents of the court were desponding, and that their followers were in general inclined to milder and more temperate measures than those which had hitherto been pursued. In every country, and in none more than in England, there is a disposition to take the part of those who are unmercifully run down, and who seem destitute of all means of defence. Every man who has observed the ebb and flow of public feeling in our own time, will easily recall examples to illustrate this remark. An English statesman ought to pay assiduous worship to Nemesis, to be most apprehensive of ruin when he is at the height of power and popularity, and to dread his enemy most, when most completely prostrated. The fate of the Coalition Ministry, in 1784, is perhaps the strongest instance in our history of the operation of this principle. A few weeks turned the ablest and most extended ministry that ever existed, into a feeble opposition, and raised a king who was talking of retiring to Hanover, to a height of power which none of his predecessors had enjoyed since the Revolution. A crisis of this description was evidently approaching in 1642. At such a crisis, a prince of a really honest and generous nature, who had erred, who had seen

his error, who had regretted the lost affections of his people, who rejoiced in the dawning hope of regaining them, would be peculiarly careful to take no step which could give occasion of offence, even to the unreasonable. On the other hand, a tyrant, whose whole life was a lie, who hated the constitution the more because he had been compelled to feign respect for it, to whom his honour and the love of his people were as nothing, would select such a crisis for some appalling violation of law, for some stroke which might remove the chiefs of an opposition, and intimidate the herd. This Charles attempted. He missed his blow: but so narrowly, that it would have been mere madness in those at whom it was aimed, to trust him again.

It deserves to be remarked, that the king had, a short time before, promised the most respectable royalists in the House of Commons, Falkland, Colepepper, and Hyde, that he would take no measure in which that House was concerned, without consulting them. On this occasion he did not consult them. His conduct astonished them more than any other members of the assembly. Clarendon says that they were deeply hurt by this want of confidence, and the more hurt, because, if they had been consulted, they would have done their utmost to dissuade Charles from so improper a proceeding. Did it never occur to Clarendon, will it not at least occur to men less partial, that there was good reason for this? When the danger to the throne seemed imminent, the king was ready to put himself for a time into the hands of those who, though they had disapproved of his past conduct, thought that the remedies had now become worse than the distempers. But we believe, that in heart he regarded both the parties in the Parliament with feelings of aversion, which differed only in the degree of their intensity; and that the lawful warning which he proposed to give by immolating the principal supporters of the remonstrance, was partly intended for the instruction of those who had concurred in censuring the ship-money, and in abolishing the Star Chamber.

The Commons informed the king that their members should be forthcoming to answer any charge legally brought against them. The Lords refused to assume the unconstitutional offices with which he attempted to invest them.

And what then was his conduct? He went, attended by hundreds of armed men, to seize the objects of his hatred in the House itself! The party opposed to him more than insinuated that his purpose was of the most atrocious kind. We will not condemn him merely on their suspicions; we will not hold him answerable for the sanguinary expressions of the loose brawlers who composed his train. We will judge of his conduct by itself alone. And we say, without hesitation, that it is impossible to acquit him of having meditated violence, and violence which might probably end in blood. He knew that the legality of his proceedings was denied; he must have known that some of the accused members were not men likely to submit peaceably to an illegal arrest. There was every reason to expect that he would find them in their places, that they would refuse to obey his summons, and that the House would support them in their refusal. What course would then have been left to him? Unless we suppose that he went on this expedition for the sole purpose of making himself ridiculous, we must believe that he would have had recourse to force. There would have been a scuffle; and it might not, under such circumstances, have been in his power, even if it were in his inclination, to prevent a scuffle from ending in a massacre. Fortunately for his fame, unfortunately perhaps for what he prized far more, the interests of his hatred and his ambition, the affair ended differently. The birds, as he said, were flown, and his plan was disconcerted. Posterity is not extreme to mark abortive crimes. And thus his advocates have found it easy to represent a step which, but for a trivial accident, might have filled England with mourning and dismay, as a mere error of judgment, wild and foolish, but perfectly innocent. Such was not, however, at the time, the opinion of any party. The most zealous royalists were so much disgusted and ashamed, that they suspended their opposition to the popular party, and, silently at least, concurred in measures of precaution so strong as almost to amount to resistance.

From that day, whatever of confidence and loyal attachment had survived the misrule of seventeen years was, in the great body of the people, extinguished, and extinguished for ever. As soon as the outrage had failed, the hypocrisy

recommenced. Down to the very eve of his flagitious attempt, Charles had been talking of his respect for the privileges of Parliament, and the liberties of his people. He began again in the same style on the morrow; but it was too late. To trust him now would have been, not moderation, but insanity. What common security would suffice against a prince who was evidently watching his season with that cold and patient hatred which, in the long run, tires out every other passion?

It is certainly from no admiration of Charles, that Mr. Hallam disapproves of the conduct of the House in resorting to arms. But he thinks that any attempt on the part of that prince to establish a despotism would have been as strongly opposed by his adherents as by his enemies; that the constitution might be considered as out of danger; or, at least, that it had more to apprehend from war than from the king. On this subject Mr. Hallam dilates at length, and with conspicuous ability. We will offer a few considerations, which lead us to incline to a different opinion.

The constitution of England was only one of a large family. In all the monarchies of western Europe, during the middle ages, there existed restraints on the royal authority, fundamental laws, and representative assemblies. In the fifteenth century, the government of Castile seems to have been as free as that of our own country. That of Arragon was beyond all question far more so. In France, the sovereign was more absolute. Yet, even in France, the States-general alone could constitutionally impose taxes; and at the very time when the authority of those assemblies was beginning to languish, the Parliament of Paris received such an accession of strength, as enabled it, in some measure, to perform the functions of a legislative assembly. Sweden and Denmark had constitutions of a similar description.

Let us overleap two or three hundred years, and contemplate Europe at the commencement of the eighteenth century. Every free constitution, save one, had gone down. That of England had weathered the danger; and was riding in full security. In Denmark and Sweden, the kings had availed themselves of the disputes which raged between the nobles and the commons, to unite all the

powers of government in their own hands. In France, the institution of the states was only maintained by lawyers, as a part of the ancient theory of their government. It slept a deep sleep—destined to be broken by a tremendous waking. No person remembered the sittings of the three orders, or expected ever to see them renewed. Louis the Fourteenth had imposed on his Parliament a patient silence of sixty years. His grandson, after the war of the Spanish succession, assimilated the constitution of Arragon to that of Castile, and extinguished the last feeble remains of liberty in the Peninsula. In England, on the other hand, the Parliament was infinitely more powerful than it had ever been. Not only was its legislative authority fully established, but its right to interfere, by advice almost equivalent to command, in every department of the executive government, was recognized. The appointment of ministers, the relations with foreign powers, the conduct of a war or a negotiation, depended less on the pleasure of the prince than on that of the two Houses.

What, then, made us to differ? Why was it that, in that epidemic malady of constitutions, ours escaped the destroying influence; or rather that, at the very crisis of the disease, a favourable turn took place in England, and in England alone? It was not surely without a cause that so many kindred systems of government, having flourished together so long, languished and expired at almost the same time.

It is the fashion to say, that the progress of civilization is favourable to liberty. The maxim, though on the whole true, must be limited by many qualifications and exceptions. Wherever a poor and rude nation, in which the form of government is a limited monarchy, receives a great accession of wealth and knowledge, it is in imminent danger of falling under arbitrary power.

In such a state of society as that which existed all over Europe during the middle ages, it was not from the king, but from the nobles, that there was danger. Very slight checks sufficed to keep the sovereign in order. His means of corruption and intimidation were very scanty. He had little money, little patronage, no military establishment. His armies resembled juries. They were draughted out of the mass of the people; they soon returned to it again; and

the character which was habitual prevailed over that which was occasional. A campaign of forty days was too short, the discipline of a national militia too lax, to efface from their minds the feelings of civil life. As they carried to the camp the sentiments and interests of the farm and the shop, so they carried back to the farm and the shop the military accomplishments which they had acquired in the camp. At home, they learned how to value their rights—abroad, how to defend them.

Such a military force as this was a far stronger restraint on the regal power, than the legislative assemblies. Resistance to an established government, in modern times so difficult and perilous an enterprise, was, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the simplest and easiest matter in the world. Indeed, it was far too simple and easy. An insurrection was got up then almost as easily as a petition is got up now. In a popular cause, or even in an unpopular cause favoured by a few great nobles, an army was raised in a week. If the king were like our Edward the Second and Richard the Second, generally odious, he could not procure a single bow or halbert. He fell at once, and without an effort. In such times, a sovereign like Louis the Fifteenth, or the Emperor Paul, would have been pulled down before his misgovernment had lasted for a month. We find that all the fame and influence of our Edward the Third could not save *his* Madame de Pompadour from the effects of the public hatred.

Hume, and many other writers, have hastily concluded, that in the fifteenth century the English Parliament was altogether servile, because it recognised, without opposition, every successful usurper. That it was not servile, its conduct on many occasions of inferior importance is sufficient to prove. But surely it was not strange that the majority of the nobles, and of the deputies chosen by the commons, should approve of revolutions which the nobles and commons had effected. The Parliament did not blindly follow the event of war; but participated in those changes of public sentiment on which the event of war depended. The legal check was secondary and auxiliary to that which the nation held in its own hands. There have always been monarchies in Asia, in which the royal authority has been

tempered by fundamental laws, though no legislative body exists to watch over them. The guaranty is the opinion of a community, of which every individual is a soldier. Thus the king of Caubul, as Mr. Elphinstone informs us, cannot augment the land revenue, or interfere with the jurisdiction of the ordinary tribunals.

In the European kingdoms of this description, there were representative assemblies. But it was not necessary that those assemblies should meet very frequently, that they should interfere with all the operations of the executive government, that they should watch with jealousy, and resent with prompt indignation, every violation of the laws which the sovereign might commit. They were so strong, that they might safely be careless. He was so feeble, that he might safely be suffered to encroach. If he ventured too far, chastisement and ruin were at hand. In fact, the people suffered more from his weakness than from his authority. The tyranny of wealthy and powerful subjects was the characteristic evil of the times. The royal prerogatives were not even sufficient for the defence of property and the maintenance of police.

The progress of civilization introduced a great change. War became a science; and, as a necessary consequence, a separate trade. The great body of the people grew every day more reluctant to undergo the inconveniences of military service, and better able to pay others for undergoing them. A new class of men, therefore—dependent on the crown alone; natural enemies of those popular rights, which are to them as the dew to the fleece of Gideon; slaves among freemen; freemen among slaves—grew into importance. That physical force, which in the dark ages had belonged to the nobles and the commons, and had, far more than any charter or any assembly, been the safeguard of their privileges, was transferred entire to the king. Monarchy gained in two ways. The sovereign was strengthened, the subjects weakened. The great mass of the population, destitute of all military discipline and organization, ceased to exercise any influence by force on political transactions. There have, indeed, during the last hundred and fifty years, been many popular insurrections in Europe; but all have failed,

except those in which the regular army has been induced to join the disaffected.

Those legal checks, which had been inadequate to the purpose for which they were designed while the sovereign remained dependent on his subjects, were now found wanting. The dykes, which had been sufficient while the waters were low, were not high enough to keep out the spring tide. The deluge passed over them; and, according to the exquisite illustration of Butler, the formal boundaries which had excluded it, now held it in. The old constitutions fared like the old shields and coats of mail. They were the defences of a rude age; and they did well enough against the weapons of a rude age. But new and more formidable means of destruction were invented. The ancient panoply became useless; and it was thrown aside to rust in lumber-rooms, or exhibited only as part of an idle pageant.

Thus absolute monarchy was established on the Continent. England escaped; but she escaped very narrowly. Happily, our insular situation, and the pacific policy of James, rendered standing armies unnecessary here, till they had been for some time kept up in the neighbouring kingdoms. Our public men had therefore an opportunity of watching the effects produced by this momentous change, in forms of government which bore a close analogy to that established in England. Every where they saw the power of the monarch increasing, the resistance of assemblies, which were no longer supported by a national force, gradually becoming more and more feeble, and at length altogether ceasing. The friends and the enemies of liberty perceived with equal clearness the causes of this general decay. It is the favourite theme of Strafford. He advises the king to procure from the judges a recognition of his right to raise an army at his pleasure. "This piece, well fortified," says he, "for ever vindicates the monarchy at home from under the conditions and restraints of subjects." We firmly believe that he was in the right. Nay; we believe that, even if no deliberate scheme of arbitrary government had been formed by the sovereign and his ministers, there was great reason to apprehend a natural extinction of the constitution. If, for example, Charles had played the part of Gustavus Adolphus; if he had carried on a popular war for the defence of the

Protestant cause in Germany; if he had gratified the national pride by a series of victories; if he had formed an army of forty or fifty thousand devoted soldiers, we do not see what chance the nation would have had of escaping from despotism. The judges would have given as strong a decision in favour of camp-money, as they gave in favour of ship-money. If they had scrupled, it would have made little difference. An individual who resisted would have been treated as Charles treated Eliot, and as Strafford wished to treat Hampden. The Parliament might have been summoned once in twenty years, to congratulate a king on his accession, or to give solemnity to some great measure of state. Such hath been the fate of legislative assemblies as powerful, as much respected, as high-spirited, as the English Lords and Commons.

The two Houses, surrounded by the ruins of so many free constitutions, overthrown or sapped by the new military system, were required to intrust the command of an army, and the conduct of the Irish war, to a king who had proposed to himself the destruction of liberty as the great end of his policy. We are decidedly of opinion that it would have been fatal to comply. Many of those who took the side of the King on this question, would have cursed their own loyality if they had seen him return from war at the head of twenty thousand troops, accustomed to carnage and free quarters in Ireland.

We think, with Mr. Hallam, that many of the royalist nobility and gentry were true friends to the constitution; and that, but for the solemn protestations by which the king bound himself to govern according to the law for the future, they never would have joined his standard. But surely they underrated the public danger. Falkland is commonly selected as the most respectable specimen of this class. He was indeed a man of great talents, and of great virtues; but, we apprehend, infinitely too fastidious for public life. He did not perceive that in such times as those on which his lot had fallen, the duty of a statesman is to choose the better cause, and to stand by it, in spite of those excesses by which every cause, however good in itself, will be disgraced. The present evil always seemed to him the worst. He was always going backward and forward; but it should be remembered to his honour, that it was always from the

stronger to the weaker side that he deserted. While Charles was oppressing the people, Falkland was a resolute champion of liberty. He attacked Strafford. He even concurred in strong measures against Episcopacy. But the violence of his party annoyed him, and drove him to the other party, to be equally annoyed there. Dreading the success of the cause which he had espoused, sickened by the courtiers of Oxford, as he had been sickened by the patriots of Westminster, yet bound by honour not to abandon them, he pined away, neglected his person, went about moaning for peace, and at last rushed desperately on death, as the best refuge in such miserable times. If he had lived through the scenes that followed, we have little doubt that he would have condemned himself to share the exile and beggary of the royal family; that he would then have returned to oppose all their measures; that he would have been sent to the Tower by the Commons as a disbeliever in the Popish Plot, and by the king as an accomplice in the Rye-House Plot; and that, if he had escaped being hanged, first by Scroggs, and then by Jeffries, he would, after manfully opposing James the Second through his whole reign, have been seized with a fit of compassion at the very moment of the Revolution, have voted for a regency, and died a nonjuror.

We do not dispute that the royal party contained many excellent men and excellent citizens. But this we say—that they did not discern those times. The peculiar glory of the Houses of Parliament is, that, in the great plague and mortality of constitutions, they took their stand between the living and the dead. At the very crisis of our destiny, at the very moment when the fate which had passed on every other nation was brought about to pass on England, they arrested the danger.

Those who conceive that the parliamentary leaders were desirous merely to maintain the old constitution, and those who represent them as conspiring to subvert it, are equally in error. The old constitution, as we have attempted to show, could not be maintained. The progress of time, the increase of wealth, the diffusion of knowledge, the great change in the European system of war, rendered it impossible that any of the monarchies of the middle ages should continue to exist on the old footing. The prerogative of

the crown was constantly advancing. If the privileges of the people were to remain absolutely stationary, they would relatively retrograde. The monarchical and democratical parts of the government were placed in a situation not unlike that of the two brothers in the Fairy Queen, one of whom saw the soil of his inheritance daily washed away by the tide and joined to that of his rival. The portions had at first been fairly meted out: by a natural and constant transfer, the one had been extended; the other had dwindled to nothing. A new partition or a compensation was necessary to restore the original equality.

It was now absolutely necessary to violate the formal part of the constitution, in order to preserve its spirit. This might have been done, as it was done at the Revolution, by expelling the reigning family, and calling to the throne princes, who, relying solely on an elective title, would find it necessary to respect the privileges and follow the advice of the assemblies to which they owed every thing, to pass every bill which the legislature strongly pressed upon them, and to fill the offices of state with men in whom it confided. But as the two Houses did not choose to change the dynasty, it was necessary that they should do directly what at the Revolution was done indirectly. Nothing is more usual than to hear it said, that if the Long Parliament had contented itself with making such a reform in the government under Charles as was afterwards made under William, it would have had the highest claim to national gratitude; and that in its violence it overshot the mark. But how was it possible to make such a settlement under Charles? Charles was not, like William and the princes of the Hanoverian line, bound by community of interests and dangers to the two Houses. It was therefore necessary that they should bind him by treaty and statute.

Mr. Hallam reprobates, in language which has a little surprised us, the nineteen propositions into which the Parliament has digested its scheme. We will ask him whether he does not think that, if James the Second had remained in the island, and had been suffered, as he probably would in that case have been suffered, to keep his crown, conditions to the full as hard would have been imposed on him? On the other hand, if the Long Parliament had pronounced the

departure of Charles from London an abdication, and had called Essex or Northumberland to the throne, the new prince might have safely been suffered to reign without such restrictions; his situation would have been a sufficient guaranty. In the nineteen propositions, we see very little to blame except the articles against the Catholics. These, however, were in the spirit of that age; and to some sturdy churchmen in our own, that may seem to palliate even the good which the Long Parliament effected. The regulation with respect to new creations of Peers is the only other article about which we entertain any doubt.

One of the propositions is, that the judges shall hold their offices during good behaviour. To this surely no exception will be taken. The right of directing the education and marriage of the princes was most properly claimed by the Parliament, on the same ground on which, after the Revolution, it was enacted, that no king, on pain of forfeiting his throne, should espouse a papist. Unless we condemn the statesmen of the Revolution, who conceived that England could not safely be governed by a sovereign married to a Catholic queen, we can scarcely condemn the Long Parliament, because, having a sovereign so situated, they thought it necessary to place him under strict restraints. The influence of Henrietta Maria had already been deeply felt in political affairs. In the regulation of her family, in the education and marriage of her children, it was still more likely to be felt. There might be another Catholic queen; possibly, a Catholic king. Little as we are disposed to join in the vulgar clamour on this subject, we think that such an event ought to be, if possible, averted; and this could only be done, if Charles was to be left on the throne, by placing his domestic arrangements under the control of Parliament.

A veto on the appointment of ministers was demanded. But this veto Parliament had virtually possessed ever since the Revolution. It is no doubt very far better that this power of the legislature should be exercised as it is now exercised, when any great occasion calls for interference, than that at every change it should have to signify its approbation or disapprobation in form. But, unless a new family had been placed on the throne, we do not see how this power could have been exercised as it is now exercised. We again

repeat, that no restraints which could be imposed on the princes who reigned after the Revolution, could have added to the security which their title afforded. They were compelled to court their parliaments. But from Charles nothing was expected which was not set down in the bond.

It was not stipulated that the king should give up his negative on acts of Parliament. But the Commons had certainly shown a strong disposition to exact this security also. "Such a doctrine," says Mr. Hallam, "was in this country as repugnant to the whole history of our laws as it was incompatible with the subsistence of the monarchy in any thing more than a nominal pre-eminence." Now this article has been as completely carried into effect by the Revolution, as if it had been formally inserted in the Bill of Rights and the Act of Settlement. We are surprised, we confess, that Mr. Hallam should attach so much importance to a prerogative which has not been exercised for a hundred and thirty years, which probably will never be exercised again, and which can scarcely, in any conceivable case, be exercised for a salutary purpose.

But the great security, that without which every other would have been insufficient, was the power of the sword. This both parties thoroughly understood. The Parliament insisted on having the command of the militia, and the direction of the Irish war. "By God, not for an hour!" exclaimed the king. "Keep the militia," said the queen, after the defeat of the royal party, "keep the militia; that will bring back every thing." That, by the old constitution, no military authority was lodged in the Parliament, Mr. Hallam has clearly shown. That it is a species of power which ought not to be permanently lodged in large and divided assemblies, must, we think, in fairness, be conceded. Opposition, publicity, long discussion, frequent compromise, these are the characteristics of the proceedings in such bodies. Unity, secresy, decision, are the qualities which military arrangements require. This undoubtedly was an evil. But, on the other hand, at such a crisis to trust such a king with the very weapon which, in hands less dangerous, had destroyed so many free constitutions, would have been the extreme of rashness. The jealousy with which the oligarchy of Venice and the States of Holland regarded their

generals and armies, induced them perpetually to interfere in matters of which they were incompetent to judge. This policy secured them against military usurpation, but placed them under great disadvantages in war. The uncontrolled power which the king of France exercised over his troops enabled him to conquer his enemies, but enabled him also to oppress his people. Was there any intermediate course? None, we confess, altogether free from objection. But, on the whole, we conceive that the best measure would have been that which the Parliament over and over proposed; that for a limited time the power of the sword should be left to the two Houses, and that it should revert to the crown when the constitution should be firmly established; when the new securities of freedom should be so far strengthened by prescription, that it would be difficult to employ even a standing army for the purpose of subverting them.

Mr. Hallam thinks that the dispute might easily have been compromised, by enacting that the king should have no power to keep a standing army on foot without the consent of Parliament. He reasons as if the question had been merely theoretical—as if at that time no army had been wanted. "The kingdom," he says, "might have well dispensed, in that age, with any military organization." Now, we think that Mr. Hallam overlooks the most important circumstance in the whole case. Ireland was at that moment in rebellion; and a great expedition would obviously be necessary to reduce that kingdom to obedience. The Houses had, therefore, to consider, not an abstract question of law, but an urgent practical question, directly involving the safety of the state. They had to consider the expediency of immediately giving a great army to a king, who was at least as desirous to put down the Parliament of England as to conquer the insurgents of Ireland.

Of course, we do not mean to defend all their measures. Far from it. There never was a perfect man; it would, therefore, be the height of absurdity to expect a perfect party or a perfect assembly. For large bodies are far more likely to err than individuals. The passions are inflamed by sympathy; the fear of punishment and the sense of shame are diminished by partition. Every day we see men do for their faction what they would die rather than do for themselves.

No private quarrel ever happens, in which the right and wrong are so exquisitely divided, that all the right lies on one side, and all the wrong on the other. But here was a schism which separated a great nation into two parties. Of these parties, each was composed of many smaller parties. Each contained many members, who differed far less from their moderate opponents than from their violent allies. Each reckoned among its supporters many who were determined in their choice by some accident of birth, of connection, or of local situation. Each of them attracted to itself in multitudes those fierce and turbid spirits, to whom the clouds and whirlwinds of the political hurricane are the atmosphere of life. A party, like a camp, has its sutlers and camp-followers, as well as its soldiers. In its progress it collects round it a vast retinue, composed of people who thrive by its custom, or are amused by its display, who may be sometimes reckoned, in an ostentatious enumeration, as forming a part of it, but who gave no aid to its operations, and take but a languid interest in its success: who relax its discipline and dishonour its flag by their irregularities; and who, after a disaster, are perfectly ready to cut the throats and rifle the baggage of their companions.

Thus it is in every great division: and thus it was in our civil war. On both sides there was, undoubtedly, enough of crime and enough of error, to disgust any man who did not reflect that the whole history of the species is nothing but a comparison of crimes and errors. Misanthropy is not the temper which qualifies a man to act in great affairs, or to judge of them.

"Of the Parliament," says Mr. Hallam, "it may be said, I think, with not greater severity than truth, that scarce two or three public acts of justice, humanity, or generosity, and very few of political wisdom or courage, are recorded of them, from their quarrel with the king to their expulsion by Cromwell." Those who may agree with us in the opinion which we have expressed as to the original demands of the Parliament, will scarcely concur in this strong censure. The propositions which the Houses made at Oxford, at Uxbridge, and at Newcastle, were in strict accordance with these demands. In the darkest period of the war, they showed no disposition to concede any vital principle. In

the fulness of their success, they showed no disposition to encroach beyond these limits. In this respect we cannot but think that they showed justice and generosity, as well as political wisdom and courage.

The Parliament was certainly far from faultless. We fully agree with Mr. Hallam in reprobating their treatment of Laud. For the individual, indeed, we entertain a more unmitigated contempt than for any other character in our history. The fondness with which a portion of the church regards his memory, can be compared only to that perversity of affection which sometimes leads a mother to select the monster or the idiot of the family as the object of her especial favour. Mr. Hallam has incidentally observed, that in the correspondence of Laud with Strafford, there are no indications of a sense of duty towards God or man. The admirers of the archbishop have, in consequence, inflicted upon the public a crowd of extracts, designed to prove the contrary. Now, in all those passages, we see nothing which a prelate as wicked as Pope Alexander or Cardinal Dubois might not have written. They indicate no sense of duty to God or man; but simply a strong interest in the prosperity and dignity of the order to which the writer belonged; an interest which, when kept within certain limits, does not deserve censure, but which can never be considered as a virtue. Laud is anxious to accommodate satisfactorily the disputes in the University of Dublin. He regrets to hear that a church is used as a stable, and that the benefices of Ireland are very poor. He is desirous that, however small a congregation may be, service should be regularly performed. He expresses a wish that the judges of the court before which questions of tithe are generally brought, should be selected with a view to the interest of the clergy. All this may be very proper; and it may be very proper that an alderman should stand up for the tolls of his borough, and an East Indian director for the charter of his company. But it is ridiculous to say that these things indicate piety and benevolence. No primate, though he were the most abandoned of mankind, would wish to see the body, with the consequence of which his own consequence was identical, degraded in the public estimation by internal dissensions,

by the ruinous state of its edifices, and the slovenly performance of its rites. We willingly acknowledge that the particular letters in question have very little harm in them;—a compliment which cannot often be paid either to the writings or to the actions of Laud.

Bad as the archbishop was, however, he was not a traitor within the statute. Nor was he by any means so formidable as to be a proper subject for a retrospective ordinance of the legislature. His mind had not expansion enough to comprehend a great scheme, good or bad. His oppressive acts were not, like those of the Earl of Strafford, parts of an extensive system. They were the luxuries in which a mean and irritable disposition indulges itself from day to day—the excesses natural to a little mind in a great place. The severest punishment which the two Houses could have inflicted on him would have been to set him at liberty, and send him to Oxford. There he might have stayed, tortured by his own diabolical temper, hungering for Puritans to pillory and mangle, plaguing the Cavaliers, for want of somebody else to plague, with his peevishness and absurdity, performing grimaces and antics in the cathedral, continuing that incomparable diary, which we never see without forgetting the vices of his heart in the abject imbecility of his intellect; minuting down his dreams, counting the drops of blood which fell from his nose, watching the direction of the salt, and listening for the note of the screech-owl! Contemptuous mercy was the only vengeance which it became the Parliament to take on such a ridiculous old bigot.

The Houses, it must be acknowledged, committed great errors in the conduct of the war; or rather one great error, which brought their affairs into a condition requiring the most perilous expedients. The parliamentary leaders of what may be called the first generation, Essex, Manchester, Northumberland, Hollis, even Pym—all the most eminent men, in short, Hampden excepted, were inclined to half-measures. They dreaded a decisive victory almost as much as a decisive overthrow. They wished to bring the king into a situation which might render it necessary for him to grant their just and wise demands; but not to subvert the constitution or to change the dynasty. They were afraid of serving the purposes of those fiercer and more deter-

mined enemies of monarchy, who now began to show themselves in the lower ranks of the party. The war was, therefore, conducted in a languid and inefficient manner. A resolute leader might have brought it to a close in a month. At the end of three campaigns, however, the event was still dubious; and that it had not been decided unfavourable to the cause of liberty, was principally owing to the skill and energy which the more violent Roundheads had displayed in subordinate situations. The conduct of Fairfax and Cromwell at Marston had exhibited a remarkable contrast to that of Essex at Edgehill, and Waller at Lansdown.

If there be any truth established by the universal experience of nations, it is this: that to carry the spirit of peace into war is a weak and cruel policy. The time of negotiation is the time for deliberation and delay. But when an extreme case calls for that remedy which is in its own nature most violent, and which, in such cases, is a remedy only because it is violent, it is idle to think of mitigating and diluting. Languid war can do nothing which negotiation or submission will not do better: and to act on any other principle is not to save blood and money, but to squander them.

This the parliamentary leaders found. The third year of hostilities was drawing to a close; and they had not conquered the king. They had not obtained even those advantages which they had expected, from a policy obviously erroneous in a military point of view. They had wished to husband their resources. They now found that, in enterprises like theirs, parsimony is the worst profusion. They had hoped to effect a reconciliation. The event taught them that the best way to conciliate is to bring the work of destruction to a speedy termination. By their moderation many lives and much property had been wasted. The angry passions which, if the contest had been short, would have died away almost as soon as they appeared, had fixed themselves in the form of deep and lasting hatred. A military caste had grown up. Those who had been induced to take up arms by the patriotic feelings of citizens, had begun to entertain the professional feelings of soldiers. Above all, the leaders of the party had forfeited its confidence. If they had,

by their valour and abilities, gained a complete victory, their influence might have been sufficient to prevent their associates from abusing it. It is now necessary to choose more resolute and uncompromising commanders. Unhappily, the illustrious man who alone united in himself all the talents and virtues which the crisis required, who alone could have saved his country from the present dangers without plunging her into others, who alone could have united all the friends of liberty in obedience to his commanding genius and his venerable name, was no more. Something might still be done. The Houses might still avert that worst of all evils, the triumphant return of an imperious and unprincipled master. They might still preserve London from all the horrors of rapine, massacre, and lust. But their hopes of a victory as spotless as their cause, of a reconciliation which might knit together the hearts of all honest Englishmen for the defence of the public good, of durable tranquillity, of temperate freedom, were buried in the grave of Hampden.

The self-denying ordinance was passed, and the army was remodelled. These measures were undoubtedly full of danger. But all that was left to the Parliament was to take the less of two dangers. And we think that, even if they could have accurately foreseen all that followed, their decision ought to have been the same. Under any circumstances, we should have preferred Cromwell to Charles. But there could be no comparison between Cromwell and Charles victorious—Charles restored, Charles enabled to feed fat all the hungry grudges of his smiling rancour and his cringing pride. The next visit of his majesty to his faithful Commons would have been more serious than that with which he last honoured them; more serious than that which their own general paid them some years after. The king would scarce have been content with collaring Marten, and praying that the Lord would deliver him from Vane. If, by fatal mismanagement, nothing was left to England but a choice of tyrants, the last tyrant whom she should have chosen was Charles.

From the apprehension of this worst evil the Houses were soon delivered by their new leaders. The armies of Charles were everywhere routed; his fastnesses stormed; his party humbled and subjugated. The king himself fell into the

hands of the Parliament; and both the king and the Parliament soon fell into the hands of the army. The fate of both the captives was the same. Both were treated alternately with respect and with insult. At length, the natural life of the one and the political life of the other were terminated by violence; and the power for which both had struggled was united in a single hand. Men naturally sympathize with the calamities of individuals; but they are inclined to look on a fallen party with contempt rather than with pity. Thus misfortune turned the greatest of Parliaments into the despised Rump, and the worst of kings into the Blessed Martyr.

Mr. Hallam decidedly condemns the execution of Charles; and in all that he says on that subject, we heartily agree. We fully concur with him in thinking that a great social schism, such as the civil war, is not to be confounded with an ordinary treason; and that the vanquished ought to be treated according to the rules, not of municipal, but of international law. In this case the distinction is of the less importance, because both international and municipal law were in favour of Charles.

He was a prisoner of war by the former, a king by the latter. By neither was he a traitor. If he had been successful, and had put his leading opponents to death, he would have deserved severe censure; and this without reference to the justice or injustice of his cause. Yet the opponents of Charles, it must be admitted, were technically guilty of treason. He might have sent them to the scaffold without violating any established principle of jurisprudence. He would not have been compelled to overturn the whole constitution in order to reach them. Here his own case differed widely from theirs. Not only was his condemnation in itself a measure which only the strongest necessity could vindicate, but it could not be procured without taking several previous steps, every one of which would have required the strongest necessity to vindicate it. It could not be procured without dissolving the government by military force, without establishing precedents of the most dangerous description, without creating difficulties which the next ten years were spent in removing, without pulling down institutions which it soon became necessary

to reconstruct, and setting up others which almost every man was soon impatient to destroy. It was necessary to strike the House of Lords out of the constitution, to exclude members of the House of Commons by force, to make a new crime, a new tribunal, a new mode of procedure. The whole legislative and judicial systems were trampled down for the purpose of taking a single head. Not only those parts of the constitution which the republicans were desirous to destroy, but those which they wished to retain and exalt, were deeply injured by these transactions. High Courts of Justice began to usurp the functions of juries. The remaining delegates of the people were soon driven from their seats by the same military violence which had enabled them to exclude their colleagues.

If Charles had been the last of his line, there would have been an intelligible reason for putting him to death. But the blow which terminated his life, at once transferred the allegiance of every royalist to an heir, and an heir who was at liberty. To kill the individual was truly, under such circumstances, not to destroy, but to release the king.

We detest the character of Charles; but a man ought not to be removed by a law *ex post facto*, even constitutionally procured, merely because he is detestable. He must also be very dangerous. We can scarcely conceive that any danger which a state can apprehend from any individual could justify the violent measures which were necessary to procure a sentence against Charles. But, in fact, the danger amounted to nothing. There was indeed danger from the attachment of a large party to his office. But this danger, his execution only increased. His personal influence was little indeed. He had lost the confidence of every party. Churchmen, Catholics, Presbyterians, Independents, his enemies, his friends, his tools, English, Scotch, Irish, all divisions and subdivisions of his people had been deceived by him. His most attached councillors turned away with shame and anguish from his false and hollow policy;—plot intertwined with plot, mine sprung beneath mine, agents disowned, promises evaded, one pledge given in private, another in public. "Oh, Mr. Secretary," says Clarendon, in a letter to Nicholas, "those stratagems have given me more sad hours

than all the misfortunes in war which have befallen the King; and look like the effects of God's anger towards us."

The abilities of Charles were not formidable. His taste in the fine arts was indeed exquisite. He was as good a writer and speaker as any modern sovereign has been. But he was not fit for active life. In negotiation, he was always trying to dupe others, and duping only himself. As a soldier, he was feeble, dilatory, and miserably wanting, not in personal courage, but in the presence of mind which his station required. His delay at Gloucester saved the Parliamentary party from destruction. At Naseby, in the very crisis of his fortune, his want of self-possession spread a fatal panic through his army. The story which Clarendon tells of that affair reminds us of the excuses by which Bessus and Bobadil explain their cudgellings. A Scotch nobleman, it seems, begged the king not to run upon his death, took hold of his bridle, and turned his horse round. No man who had much value for his life would have tried to perform the same friendly office on that day for Oliver Cromwell.

One thing, and one alone, could make Charles dangerous —a violent death. His tyranny could not break the high spirit of the English people. His arms could not conquer, his arts could not deceive them; but his humiliation and his execution melted them into a generous compassion. Men who die on a scaffold for political offences almost always die well. The eyes of thousands are fixed upon them. Enemies and admirers are watching their demeanour. Every tone of voice, every change of colour, is to go down to posterity. Escape is impossible. Supplication is vain. In such a situation, pride and despair have often been known to nerve the weakest minds with fortitude adequate to the occasion. Charles died patiently and bravely; not more patiently or bravely, indeed, than many other victims of political rage; not more patiently or bravely than his own Judges, who were not only killed, but tortured, or than Vane, who had always been considered as a timid man. However, his conduct during his trial and at his execution made a prodigious impression. His subjects began to love his memory as heartily as they had hated his person; and posterity has estimated his character from his death, rather than from his life.

To represent Charles as a martyr in the cause of Epis-

copacy is absurd. Those who put him to death cared as little for the Assembly of Divines as for the Convocation; and would, in all probability, only have hated him the more if he had agreed to set up the Presbyterian discipline; and, in spite of the opinion of Mr. Hallam, we are inclined to think that the attachment of Charles to the Church of England was altogether political. Human nature is indeed so capricious, that there may be a single sensitive point in a conscience which everywhere else is callous. A man without truth or humanity may have some strange scruples about a trifle. There was once a devout warrior in the royal camp, whose piety bore a great resemblance to that which is ascribed to the king. We mean Colonel Turner. That gallant cavalier was hanged, after the Restoration, for a flagitious burglary. At the gallows, he told the crowd that his mind received great consolation from one reflection—he had always taken off his hat when he went into a church! The character of Charles would scarcely rise in our estimation, if we believed that he was pricked in conscience after the manner of this worthy loyalist; and that, while violating all the first rules of Christian morality, he was sincerely scrupulous about church-government. But we acquit him of such weakness. In 1641, he deliberately confirmed the Scotch declaration, which stated that the government of the church by archbishops and bishops was contrary to the word of God. In 1645, he appears to have offered to set up Popery in Ireland. That a king who had established the Presbyterian religion in one kingdom, and who was willing to establish the Catholic religion in another, should have insurmountable scruples about the ecclesiastical constitution of the third, is altogether incredible. He himself says, in his letters, that he looks on Episcopacy as a stronger support of of monarchical power than even the army. From causes which we have already considered, the Established Church had been, since the Reformation, the great bulwark of the prerogative. Charles wished therefore to preserve it. He thought himself necessary both to the Parliament and to the army. He did not foresee, till too late, that by paltering with the Presbyterians, he should put both them and himself into the power of a fiercer and more daring party. If he had foreseen it, we suspect that the royal blood, which still

cries to Heaven every thirtieth of January for judgments, only to be averted by salt fish and egg-sauce, would never have been shed. One who had swallowed the Scotch Declaration would scarcely strain at the Covenant.

The death of Charles, and the strong measures which led to it, raised Cromwell to a height of power fatal to the infant commonwealth. No men occupy so splendid a place in history as those who have founded monarchies on the ruins of republican institutions. Their glory, if not of the purest, is assuredly of the most seductive and dazzling kind. In nations broken to the curb, in nations long accustomed to be transferred from one tyrant to another, a man without eminent qualities may easily gain supreme power. The defection of a troop of guards, a conspiracy of eunuchs, a popular tumult, might place an indolent senator or a brutal soldier on the throne of the Roman world. Similar revolutions have often occurred in the despotic states of Asia. But a community which has heard the voice of truth, and experienced the pleasures of liberty, in which the merits of statesmen and of systems are freely canvassed, in which obedience is paid, not to persons, but to laws, in which magistrates are regarded not as the lords, but as the servants of the public, in which the excitement of party is a necessary of life, in which political warfare is reduced to a system of tactics;—such a community is not easily reduced to servitude. Beasts of burden may easily be managed by a new master; but will the wild ass submit to the bonds? will the unicorn serve and abide by the crib? will leviathan hold out his nostrils to the hook? The mythological conqueror of the East, whose enchantments reduced the wild beasts to the tameness of domestic cattle, and who harnessed lions and tigers to his chariot, is but an imperfect type of those extraordinary minds which have thrown a spell on the fierce spirits of nations unaccustomed to control, and have compelled raging factions to obey their reins and swell their triumph. The enterprise, be it good or bad, is one which requires a truly great man. It demands courage, activity, energy, wisdom, firmness, conspicuous virtues, or vices so splendid and alluring as to resemble virtues.

Those who have succeeded in this arduous undertaking form a very small and a very remarkable class. Parents of

tyranny, but heirs of freedom, kings among citizens, citizens among kings, they unite in themselves the characteristics of the system which springs from them, and of the system from which they have sprung. Their reigns shine with a double light, the last and dearest rays of departing freedom, mingled with the first and brightest glories of empire in its dawn. Their high qualities lend to despotism itself a charm drawn from the institutions under which they were formed, and which they have destroyed. They resemble Europeans who settle within the tropics, and carry thither the strength and the energetic habits acquired in regions more propitious to the constitution. They differ as widely from princes nursed in the purple of imperial cradles, as the companions of Gama from their dwarfish and imbecile progeny, which, born in a climate unfavourable to its growth and beauty, degenerates more and more, at every descent, from the qualities of the original conquerors.

In this class, three men stand pre-eminent; Cæsar, Cromwell, and Bonaparte. The highest place in this remarkable triumvirate belongs undoubtedly to Cæsar. He united the talents of Bonaparte to those of Cromwell; and he possessed also, what neither Cromwell nor Bonaparte possessed, learning, taste, wit, eloquence, the sentiments and the manners of an accomplished gentleman.

Between Cromwell and Napoleon Mr. Hallam has instituted a parallel, scarcely less ingenious than that which Burke has drawn between Richard Cœur de Lion and Charles the Twelfth of Sweden. In this parallel, however, and indeed throughout his work, we think that he hardly gives Cromwell fair measure. "Cromwell," says he, "far unlike his antitype, never showed any signs of a legislative mind, or any desire to place his renown on that noblest basis, the amelioration of social institutions." The difference, in this respect, we conceive, was not in the characters of the men, but in the characters of the revolutions by means of which they rose to power. The civil war in England had been undertaken to defend and restore; the republicans of France set themselves to destroy. In England, the principles of the common law had never been disturbed; and most even of its forms had been held sacred. In France, the law and its ministers had been swept

away together. In France, therefore, legislation necessarily became the first business of the first settled government which rose on the ruins of the old system. The admirers of Inigo Jones have always maintained that his works are inferior to those of Sir Christopher Wren, only because the great fire in London gave to the latter such a field for the display of his powers, as no architect in the history of the world ever possessed. Similar allowance must be made for Cromwell. If he erected little that was new, it was because there had been no general devastation to clear a space for him. As it was, he reformed the representative system in a most judicious manner. He rendered the administration of justice uniform throughout the island. We will quote a passage from his speech to the Parliament in September, 1656, which contains, we think, stronger indications of a legislative mind than are to be found in the whole range of orations delivered on such occasions before or since.

"There is one general grievance in the nation. It is the law. . . . I think, I may say it, I have as eminent judges in this land as have been had, or that the nation has had for these many years. Truly, I could be particular as to the executive part, to the administration; but that would trouble you. But the truth of it is, there are wicked and abominable laws that will be in your power to alter. To hang a man for sixpence, threepence, I know not what—to hang for a trifle and pardon murder, is in the ministration of the law through the ill-framing of it. I have known in my experience abominable murders quitted; and to see men lose their lives for petty matters! This is a thing that God will reckon for; and I wish it may not lie upon this nation a day longer than you have an opportunity to give a remedy; and I hope I shall cheerfully join with you in it."

Mr. Hallam truly says, that though it is impossible to rank Cromwell with Napoleon as a general, yet "his exploits were as much above the level of his contemporaries, and more the effects of an original uneducated capacity." Bonaparte was trained in the best military schools; the army which he led to Italy was one of the finest that ever existed. Cromwell passed his youth and the prime of his manhood in a civil situation. He never looked on war till he was more than forty years old. He had first to form himself; and

then to form his troops. Out of raw levies he created an army, the bravest and the best disciplined, the most orderly in peace, and the most terrible in war, that Europe had seen. He called this body into existence. He led it to conquest. He never fought a battle without gaining a victory. He never gained a victory without annihilating the force opposed to him. Yet his triumphs were not the highest glory of his military system. The respect which his troops paid to property, their attachment to the laws and religion of their country, their submission to the civil power, their temperance, their intelligence, their industry, are without parallel. It was after the Restoration that the spirit which their great leader had infused into them was most signally displayed. At the command of the established government, a government which had no means of enforcing obedience, fifty thousand soldiers, whose backs no enemy had ever seen, either in domestic or continental war, laid down their arms, and retired into the mass of the people; thenceforward to be distinguished only by superior diligence, sobriety, and regularity in the pursuits of peace, from the other members of the community which they had saved.

In the general spirit and character of his administration, we think Cromwell far superior to Napoleon. "In civil government," says Mr. Hallam, "there can be no adequate parallel between one who had sucked only the dregs of a besotted fanaticism, and one to whom the stores of reason and philosophy were open." These expressions, it seems to us, convey the highest eulogium on our great countryman. Reason and philosophy did not teach the conqueror of Europe to command his passions, or to pursue, as a first object, the happiness of the people. They did not prevent him from risking his fame and his power in a frantic contest against the principles of human nature and the laws of the physical world, against the rage of the winter and the liberty of the sea. They did not exempt him from the influence of that most pernicious of superstitions, a presumptuous fatalism. They did not preserve him from the inebriation of prosperity, or restrain him from indecent querulousness and violence in adversity. On the other hand, the fanaticism of Cromwell never urged him on impracticable undertakings, or confused his perception of the public good. Inferior to

Bonaparte in invention, he was far superior to him in wisdom. The French emperor is among conquerors what Voltaire is among writers, a miraculous child. His splendid genius was frequently clouded by fits of humour as absurdly perverse as those of the pet of the nursery, who quarrels with his food, and dashes his playthings to pieces. Cromwell was emphatically a man. He possessed, in an eminent degree, that masculine and full-grown robustness of mind, that equally diffused intellectual health, which, if our national partiality does not mislead us, has peculiarly characterized the great men of England. Never was any ruler so conspicuously born for sovereignty. The cup which has intoxicated almost all others, sobered him. His spirit, restless from its buoyancy in a lower sphere, reposed in majestic placidity as soon as it had reached the level congenial to it. He had nothing in common with that large class of men who distinguish themselves in lower posts, and whose incapacity becomes obvious as soon as the public voice summons them to take the lead. Rapidly as his fortunes grew, his mind expanded more rapidly still. Insignificant as a private citizen, he was a great general; he was a still greater prince. The manner of Napoleon was a theatrical compound, in which the coarseness of a revolutionary guard-room was blended with the ceremony of the old court of Versailles. Cromwell, by the confession even of his enemies, exhibited in his demeanour the simple and natural noblenes of a man neither ashamed of his origin, nor vain of his elevation; of a man who had found his proper place in society, and who felt secure that he was competent to fill it. Easy, even to familiarity, where his own dignity was concerned, he was punctilious only for his country. His own character he left to take care of itself; he left it to be defended by his victories in war, and his reforms in peace. But he was a jealous and implacable guardian of the public honour. He suffered a crazy Quaker to insult him in the midst of Whitehall, and revenged himself only by liberating him and giving him a dinner. But he was prepared to risk the chances of war to avenge the blood of a private Englishman.

No sovereign ever carried to the throne so large a portion of the best qualities of the middling orders, so strong a sym-

pathy with the feelings and interests of his people. He was sometimes driven to arbitrary measures; but he had a high, stout, honest, English heart. Hence it was that he loved to surround his throne with such men as Hale and Blake. Hence it was that he allowed so large a share of political liberty to his subjects, and that, even when an opposition, dangerous to his power and to his person almost compelled him to govern by the sword, he was still anxious to leave a germ from which, at a more favourable season, free institutions might spring. We firmly believe, that if his first Parliament had not commenced its debates by disputing his title, his government would have been as mild at home as it was energetic and able abroad. He was a soldier—he had risen by war. Had his ambition been of an impure or selfish kind, it would have been easy for him to plunge his country into continental hostilities on a large scale, and to dazzle the restless factions which he ruled by the splendour of his victories. Some of his enemies have sneeringly remarked, that in the successes obtained under his administration, he had no personal share; as if a man who had raised himself from obscurity to empire, solely by his military talents, could have any unworthy reason for shrinking from military enterprise. This reproach is his highest glory. In the success of the English navy he could have no selfish interests. Its triumphs added nothing to his fame; its increase added nothing to his means of overawing his enemies; its great leader was not his friend. Yet he took a peculiar pleasure in encouraging that noble service, which, of all the instruments employed by an English government, is the most impotent for mischief, and the most powerful for good. His administration was glorious, but with no vulgar glory. It was not one of those periods of overstrained and convulsive exertion which necessarily produce debility and languor. Its energy was natural, healthful, temperate. He placed England at the head of the Protestant interest, and in the first rank of Christian powers. He taught every nation to value her friendship and to dread her enmity. But he did not squander her resources in a vain attempt to invest her with that supremacy which no power, in the modern system of Europe, can safely affect, or can long retain.

This noble and sober wisdom had its reward. If he did

not carry the banners of the Commonwealth in triumph to distant capitals; if he did not adorn Whitehall with the spoils of the Stadthouse and the Louvre; if he did not portion out Flanders and Germany into principalities for his kinsmen and his generals; he did not, on the other hand, see his country overrun by the armies of nations which his ambition had provoked. He did not drag out the last years of his life in exile and a prisoner, in an unhealthy climate and under an ungenerous jailer, raging with the impotent desire of vengeance, and brooding over visions of departed glory. He went down to his grave in the fulness of power and fame, and left to his son an authority which any man of ordinary firmness and prudence would have retained.

But for the weakness of that foolish Ishbosheth, the opinions which we have been expressing would, we believe, now have formed the orthodox creed of good Englishmen. We might now be writing under the government of his Highness Oliver the Fifth, or Richard the Fourth, Protector, by the Grace of God, of the Commonwealth of England, Scotland, and Ireland, and the dominions thereto belonging. The form of the great founder of the dynasty, on horseback, as when he led the charge at Naseby, or on foot, as when he took the mace from the table of the Commons, would adorn all our squares, and overlook our public offices from Charing-Cross; and sermons in his praise would be duly preached on his lucky day, the third of September, by court-chaplains, guiltless of the abominations of the surplice.

But, though his memory has not been taken under the patronage of any party, though every device has been used to blacken it, though to praise him would long have been a punishable crime, yet truth and merit at last prevail. Cowards, who had trembled at the very sound of his name, tools of office, who, like Downing, had been proud of the honour of lacqueying his coach, might insult him in loyal speeches and addresses. Venal poets might transfer to the King the same eulogies, little the worse for wear, which they had bestowed on the Protector. A fickle multitude might crowd to shout and scoff round the gibbeted remains of the greatest Prince and Soldier of the age. But when the Dutch cannon startled an effeminate tyrant in his own palace, when the conquests which had been made by the armies of

Cromwell were sold to pamper the harlots of Charles, when Englishmen were sent to fight, under the banners of France, against the independence of Europe and the Protestant religion, many honest hearts swelled in secret at the thought of one who had never suffered his country to be ill-used by any but himself. It must indeed have been difficult for any Englishman to see the salaried Viceroy of France, at the most important crisis of his fate, sauntering through his harem, yawning and talking nonsense over a despatch, or beslobbering his brothers and his courtiers in a fit of maudlin affection,* without a respectful and tender remembrance of him, before whose genius the young pride of Louis and the veteran craft of Mazarin had stood rebuked; who had humbled Spain on the land and Holland on the sea; and whose imperial voice had arrested the victorious arms of Sweden, and the persecuting fires of Rome. Even to the present day, his character, though constantly attacked and scarcely ever defended, is popular with the great body of our countrymen.

The most questionable act of his life was the execution of Charles. We have already strongly condemned that proceeding; but we by no means consider it as one which attaches any peculiar stigma of infamy to the names of those who participated in it. It was an unjust and injudicious display of violent party spirit; but it was not a cruel or perfidious measure. It had all those features which distinguish the errors of magnanimous and intrepid spirits from base and malignant crimes.

We cannot quit this interesting topic, without saying a few words on a transaction which Mr. Hallam has made the subject of a severe accusation against Cromwell, and which has been made by others the subject of a severe accusation against Mr. Hallam. We conceive that both the Protector and the historian may be vindicated. Mr. Hallam tells us that Cromwell sold fifty English gentlemen as slaves in Barbadoes. For making this statement, he has been charged with two high literary crimes. The first accusation is, that, from his violent prejudice against Oliver, he has calumniated

* These particulars, and many more of the same kind, are recorded by Pepys.

him falsely. The second, preferred by the same accuser, is, that from his violent fondness for the same Oliver, he has hidden his calumnies against him at the fag end of a note, instead of putting them into the text. Both these imputations cannot possibly be true, and it happens that neither is so. His censors will find, when they take the trouble to read his book, that the story is mentioned in the text as well as in the notes; and they will also find, when they take the trouble to read some other books, with which speculators on English history ought to be acquainted, that the story is true. If there could have been any doubt about the matter, Burton's Diary must have set it at rest. But, in truth, there was abundant and superabundant evidence, before the appearance of that valuable publication. Not to mention the authority to which Mr. Hallam refers, and which alone is perfectly satisfactory, there is Slingsby Bethel's account of the proceedings of Richard Cromwell's parliament, published immediately after its dissolution. He was a member; he must therefore have known what happened; and violent as his prejudices were, he never could have been such an idiot as to state positive falsehoods with respect to public transactions which had taken place only a few days before. It will not be quite so easy to defend Cromwell against Mr. Hallam, as to defend Mr. Hallam against those who attack his history. But the story is certainly by no means so bad as he takes it to be. In the first place, this slavery was merely the compulsory labour to which every transported convict is liable. Nobody acquainted with the language of the last century, can be ignorant that such convicts were generally termed slaves; until discussions about another species of slavery, far more miserable and altogether unmerited, rendered the word too odious to be applied even to felons of English origin. These persons enjoyed the protection of the law during the term of their service, which was only five years. The punishment of transportation has been inflicted by almost every government that England has ever had, for political offences. After Monmouth's insurrection, and after the rebellions in 1715 and 1745, great numbers of the prisoners were sent to America. These considerations ought, we think, to free Cromwell from the imputation of having inflicted on his enemies any punish-

ment which in itself is of a shocking and atrocious character.

To transport fifty men, however, without a trial, is bad enough. But let us consider, in the first place, that some of these men were taken in arms against the government, and that it is not clear that they were not all so taken. In that case, Cromwell or his officers might, according to the usages of those unhappy times, have put them to the sword, or turned them over to the provost-marshal at once. This, we allow, is not a complete vindication; for execution by martial law ought never to take place but under circumstances which admit of no delay; and if there is time to transport men, there is time to try them.

The defenders of the measure stated in the House of Commons, that the persons thus transported not only consented to go, but went with remarkable cheerfulness. By this, we suppose it is to be understood, not that they had any very violent desire to be bound apprentices in Barbadoes, but that they considered themselves as, on the whole, fortunately and leniently treated, in the situation in which they had placed themselves.

When these considerations are fairly estimated, it must, we think, be allowed that this selling into slavery was not, as it seems at first sight, a barbarous outrage, unprecedented in our annals, but merely a very arbitrary proceeding, which, like most of the arbitrary proceedings of Cromwell, was rather a violation of positive law than of any great principle of justice and mercy. When Mr. Hallam declares it to have been more oppressive than any of the measures of Charles the Second, he forgets, we imagine, that under the reign of that prince, and during the administration of Lord Clarendon, many of the Roundheads were, without any trial, imprisoned at a distance from England, merely in order to remove them beyond the reach of the great liberating writ of our law. But, in fact, it is not fair to compare the cases. The government of Charles was perfectly secure. The "*res dura et regni novitas*" is the great apology of Cromwell.

From the moment that Cromwell is dead and buried, we go on in almost perfect harmony with Mr. Hallam to the end of his book. The times which followed the Restoration peculiarly require that unsparing impartiality which is his

most distinguishing virtue. No part of our history during the last three centuries presents a spectacle of such general dreariness. The whole breed of our statesmen seem to have degenerated; and their moral and intellectual littleness strikes us with the more disgust, because we see it placed in immediate contrast with the high and majestic qualities of the race which they succeeded. In the great civil war, even the bad cause had been rendered respectable and amiable, by the purity and elevation of mind which many of its friends displayed. Under Charles the Second, the best and noblest of ends was disgraced by means the most cruel and sordid. The rage of faction succeeded to the love of liberty; loyalty died away into servility. We look in vain among the leading politicians of either side for steadiness of principle, or even for that vulgar fidelity to party which in our time it is esteemed infamous to violate. The inconsistency, perfidy, and baseness, which the leaders constantly practised, which their followers defended, and which the great body of the people regarded, as it seems, with little disapprobation, appear in the present age almost incredible. In the age of Charles the First, they would, we believe, have excited as much astonishment.

Man, however, is always the same; and when so marked a difference appears between two generations, it is certain that the solution may be found in their respective circumstances. The principal statesmen of the reign of Charles the Second were trained during the civil war, and the revolutions which followed it. Such a period is eminently favourable to the growth of quick and active talents. It forms a class of men, shrewd, vigilant, inventive, of men whose dexterity triumphs over the most perplexing combinations of circumstances, whose presaging instinct, no sign of the times, no incipient change of public feelings, can elude. But it is an unpropitious season for the firm and masculine virtues. The statesman who enters on his career at such a time, can form no permanent connections—can make no accurate observations on the higher parts of political science. Before he can attach himself to a party, it is scattered; before he can study the nature of a government, it is overturned. The oath of abjuration comes close on the oath of allegiance. The association which was subscribed yester-

day, is burned by the hangman to-day. In the midst of the constant eddy and change, self-preservation becomes the first object of the adventurer. It is a task too hard for the strongest head, to keep itself from becoming giddy in the eternal whirl. Public spirit is out of the question; a laxity of principle, without which no public man can be eminent, or even safe, becomes too common to be scandalous; and the whole nation looks coolly on instances of apostasy, which would startle the foulest turncoat of more settled times.

The history of France since the revolution affords some striking illustrations of these remarks. The same man was minister of the republic, of Bonaparte, of Louis the Eighteenth, of Bonaparte again after his return from Elba, of Louis again after his return from Ghent; yet all these manifold treasons by no means seemed to destroy his influence, or even to fix any peculiar stain of infamy on his character. We, to be sure, did not know what to make of him; but his countrymen did not seem to be shocked; and in truth, they had little right to be shocked: for there was scarcely one Frenchman distinguished in the state or in the army, who had not, according to the best of his talents and opportunities, emulated the example. It was natural, too, that this should be the case. The rapidity and violence with which change followed change in the affairs of France towards the close of the last century, had taken away the reproach of inconsistency, unfixed the principles of public men, and produced in many minds a general skepticism and indifference about principles of government.

No Englishman who has studied attentively the reign of Charles the Second, will think himself entitled to indulge in any feelings of national superiority over the *Dictionnaire des Girouettes*. Shaftesbury was surely a far less respectable man than Talleyrand; and it would be injustice even to Fouché, to compare him with Lauderdale. Nothing, indeed, can more clearly show how low the standard of political morality had fallen in this country, than the fortunes of the men whom we have named. The government wanted a ruffian to carry on the most atrocious system of misgovernment with which any nation was ever cursed—to extirpate Presbyterianism by fire and sword, the drowning of women, and the frightful torture of the boot; and they found him

among the chiefs of the rebellion and the subscribers of the Covenant! The opposition looked for a chief to head them in the most desperate attacks ever made, under the forms of the constitution, on any English administration; and they selected the minister who had the deepest share in the worst parts of that administration—the soul of the cabal—the counsellor who had shut up the Exchequer, and urged on the Dutch war. The whole political drama was of the same cast. No unity of plan, no decent propriety of character and costume, could be found in the wild and monstrous harlequinade. The whole was made up of extravagant transformations and burlesque contrasts; Atheists turned Puritans; Puritans turned Atheists; republicans defending the divine right of kings; prostitute courtiers clamouring for the liberties of the people; judges inflaming the rage of mobs; patriots pocketing bribes from foreign powers; a popish prince torturing Presbyterians into Episcopacy in one part of the island; Presbyterians cutting off the heads of popish noblemen and gentlemen in the other. Public opinion has its natural flux and reflux. After a violent burst, there is commonly a reaction. But vicissitudes as extraordinary as those which marked the reign of Charles the Second, can only be explained by supposing an utter want of principle in the political world. On neither side was there fidelity enough to face a reverse. Those honourable retreats from power, which, in later days, parties have often made, with loss, but still in good order, in firm union, with unbroken spirit and formidable means of annoyance, were utterly unknown. As soon as a check took place, a total rout followed; arms and colours were thrown away. The vanquished troops, like the Italian mercenaries of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, enlisted, on the very field of battle, in the service of the conquerors. In a nation proud of its sturdy justice and plain good sense, no party could be found to take a firm middle stand between the worst of oppositions and the worst of courts. When, on charges as wild as Mother Goose's tales, on the testimony of wretches who proclaimed themselves to be spies and traitors, and whom everybody now believes to have been also liars and murderers, the offal of jails and brothels, the leavings of the hangman's whip and shears, Catholics guilty of nothing but

their religion were led like sheep to the Protestant shambles, where were the loyal Tory gentry and the passively obedient clergy? And where, when the time of retribution came, when laws were strained and juries packed to destroy the leaders of the Whigs, when charters were invaded, when Jeffries and Kirke were making Somersetshire what Lauderdale and Graham had made Scotland, where were the ten thousand brisk boys of Shaftesbury, the members of ignoramus juries, the wearers of the Polish medal? All powerful to destroy others, unable to save themselves, the members of the two parties oppressed and were oppressed, murdered and were murdered, in their turn. No lucid interval occurred between the frantic paroxysms of two contradictory illusions.

To the frequent changes of the government during the twenty years which had preceded the Revolution, this unsteadiness is in a great measure to be attributed. Other causes had also been at work. Even if the country had been governed by the house of Cromwell, or the remains of the Long Parliament, the extreme austerity of the Puritans would necessarily have produced a revulsion. Towards the close of the Protectorate, many signs indicated that a time of license was at hand. But the restoration of Charles the Second rendered the change wonderfully rapid and violent. Profligacy became a test of orthodoxy and loyalty, a qualification for rank and office. A deep and general taint infected the morals of the most influential classes, and spread itself through every province of letters. Poetry inflamed the passions; philosophy undermined the principles; divinity itself, inculcating an abject reverence for the court, gave additional effect to its licentious example. We look in vain for those qualities which give a charm to the errors of high and ardent natures, for the generosity, the tenderness, the chivalrous delicacy, which ennoble appetites into passions, and impart to vice itself a portion of the majesty of virtue. The excesses of the age remind us of the humours of a gang of footpads, revelling with their favourite beauties at a flash-house. In the fashionable libertinism there is a hard, cold ferocity, an impudence, a lowness, a dirtiness, which can be paralleled only among the heroes and heroines of that filthy and heartless literature which encouraged it. One noble-

man of great abilities wanders about as a Merry-Andrew. Another harangues the mob stark-naked from a window. A third lays an ambush to cudgel a man who has offended him. A knot of gentlemen of high rank and influence combine to push their fortunes at court, by circulating stories intended to ruin an innocent girl, stories which had no foundation, and which, if they had been true, would never have passed the lips of a man of honour.* A dead child is found in the palace, the offspring of some maid of honour, by some courtier, or perhaps by Charles himself. The whole flight of panders and buffoons pounce upon it, and carry it in triumph to the royal laboratory, where his Majesty, after a brutal jest, dissects it for the amusement of the assembly, and probably of its father among the rest! The favourite duchess stamps about Whitehall cursing and swearing. The ministers employ their time at the council-board in making mouths at each other, and taking off each other's gestures for the amusement of the king. The peers at a conference begin to pommel each other, and to tear collars and periwigs. A speaker in the House of Commons gives offence to the court. He is waylaid by a gang of bullies, and his nose is cut to the bone. This ignominious dissoluteness, or rather, if we may venture to designate it by the only proper word, blackguardism of feelings and manners, could not but spread from private to public life. The cynical sneers, the epicurean sophistry, which had driven honour and virtue from one part of the character, extended their influence over every other. The second generation of the statesmen of this reign, were worthy pupils of the schools in which they had been trained, of the gaming-table of Grammont, and the tiring-room of Nell. In no other age could such a trifler as Buckingham have exercised any political influence. In no other age could the path to power and glory have been thrown open to the manifold infamies of Churchill.

The history of that celebrated man shows, more clearly perhaps than that of any other individual, the malignity and extent of the corruption which had eaten into the heart of

* The manner in which Hamilton relates the circumstances of the atrocious plot against poor Ann Hyde is, if possible, more disgraceful to the court, of which he may be considered as a specimen, than the plot itself.

the public morality. An English gentleman of family attaches himself to a prince who has seduced his sister, and accepts rank and wealth as the price of her shame and his own. He then repays by ingratitude the benefits which he has purchased by ignominy, betrays his patron in a manner which the best cause cannot excuse, and commits an act, not only of private treachery, but of distinct military desertion. To his conduct at the crisis of the fate of James, no service in modern times has, as far as we remember, furnished any parallel. The conduct of Ney, scandalous enough no doubt, is the very fastidiousness of honour in comparison to it. The perfidy of Arnold approaches it most nearly. In our age and country, no talents, no services, no party attachments could bear any man up under such mountains of infamy. Yet, even before Churchill had performed those great actions, which in some degree redeem his character with posterity, the load lay very lightly on him. He had others in abundance to keep him countenance. Godolphin, Oxford, Danby, the trimmer Halifax, the renegade Sunderland, were all men of the same class.

Where such was the political morality of the noble and the wealthy, it may easily be conceived that those professions which, even in the best times, are peculiarly liable to corruption, were in a frightful state. Such a bench and such a bar England has never seen. Jones, Scroggs, Jeffries, North, Wright, Sawyer, Williams, Shower, are to this day the spots and blemishes of our legal chronicles. Differing in constitution and in situation, whether blustering or cringing, whether persecuting Protestants or Catholics, they were equally unprincipled and inhuman. The part which the Church played was not equally atrocious; but it must have been exquisitely diverting to a scoffer. Never were principles so loudly professed, and so flagrantly abandoned. The royal prerogative had been magnified to the skies in theological works; the doctrine of passive obedience had been preached from innumerable pulpits. The University of Oxford had sentenced the works of the most moderate constitutionalists to the flames. The accession of a Catholic King, the frightful cruelties committed in the west of England, never shook the steady loyalty of the clergy. But did they serve the King for naught? He laid his hand

on them, and they cursed him to his face. He touched the revenue of a college and the liberty of some prelates, and the whole profession set up a yell worthy of Hugh Peters himself. Oxford sent its plate to an invader with more alacrity than she had shown when Charles the First requested it. Nothing was said about the wickedness of resistance till resistance had done its work, till the anointed vicegerent of heaven had been driven away, and it had become plain that he would never be restored, or would be restored at least under strict limitations. The clergy went back, it must be owned, to their old theory, as soon as they found that it would do them no harm.

To the general baseness and profligacy of the times, Clarendon is principally indebted for his high reputation. He was, in every respect, a man unfit for his age, at once too good for it and too bad for it. He seemed to be one of the statesmen of Elizabeth, transplanted at once to a state of society widely different from that in which the abilities of such statesmen had been serviceable. In the sixteenth century the royal prerogative had scarcely been called in question. A minister who held it high was in no danger, so long as he used it well. The attachment to the crown, that extreme jealousy of popular encroachments, that love, half religious, half political, for the church, which, from the beginning of the Long Parliament, showed itself in Clarendon, and which his sufferings, his long residence in France, and his high station in the government, served to strengthen, would, a hundred years earlier, have secured to him the favour of his sovereign without rendering him odious to the people. His probity, his correctness in private life, his decency of deportment, and his general ability, would not have misbecome a colleague of Walsingham and Burleigh. But in the times on which he was cast, his errors and his virtues were alike out of place. He imprisoned men without trial. He was accused of raising unlawful contributions on the people for the support of the army. The abolition of the Triennial Act was one of his favourite objects. He seems to have meditated the revival of the Star-Chamber and the High Commission Court. His zeal for the prerogative made him unpopular; but it could not secure to him the favour of a master far more desirous of ease and pleasure

than of power. Charles would rather have lived in exile and privacy, with abundance of money, a crowd of mimics to amuse him, and a score of mistresses, than have purchased the absolute dominion of the world by the privations and exertions to which Clarendon was constantly urging him. A councillor who was always bringing him papers and giving him advice, and who stoutly refused to compliment Lady Castlemaine, and to carry messages to Miss Stewart, soon became more hateful to him than ever Cromwell had been. Thus considered by the people as an oppressor, by the court as a censor, the minister fell from his high office, with a ruin more violent and destructive than could ever have been his fate, if he had either respected the principles of the constitution, or flattered the vices of the King.

Mr. Hallam has formed, we think, a most correct estimate of the character and administration of Clarendon. But he scarcely makes sufficient allowance for the wear and tear which honesty almost necessarily sustains in the friction of political life, and which, in times so rough as those through which Clarendon passed, must be very considerable. When these are fairly estimated, we think that his integrity may be allowed to pass muster. A highminded man he certainly was not, either in public or in private affairs. His own account of his conduct in the affair of his daughter is the most extraordinary passage in autobiography. We except nothing even in the Confessions of Rousseau. Several writers have taken a perverted and absurd pride in representing themselves as detestable; but no other ever laboured hard to make himself despicable and ridiculous. In one important particular, Clarendon showed as little regard to the honour of his country, as he had shown to that of his family. He accepted a subsidy from France for the relief of Portugal. But this method of obtaining money was afterwards practised to a much greater extent, and for objects much less respectable, both by the Court and by the Opposition.

These pecuniary transactions are commonly considered as the most disgraceful part of the history of those times; and they were no doubt highly reprehensible. Yet, in justice to the Whigs, and to Charles himself, we must admit that they were not so shameful or atrocious, as at the present day they

appear. The effect of violent animosities between parties has always been an indifference to the general welfare and honour of the state. A politician, where factions run high, is interested, not for the whole people, but for his own section of it. The rest are, in his view, strangers, enemies, or rather pirates. The strongest aversion which he can feel to any foreign power is the ardour of friendship, compared with the loathing which he entertains towards those domestic foes with whom he is cooped up in a narrow space, with whom he lives in a constant interchange of petty injuries and insults, and from whom, in the day of their success, he has to expect severities far beyond any that a conqueror from a distant country would inflict. Thus, in Greece, it was a point of honour for a man to leave his country and cleave to his party. No aristocratical citizen of Samos or Corcyra would have hesitated to call in the aid of Lacedæmon. The multitude, on the contrary, looked to Athens. In the Italian states of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, from the same cause, no man was so much a Florentine or a Pisan, as a Ghibeline or a Guelf. It may be doubted whether there was a single individual who would have scrupled to raise his party from a state of depression, by opening the gates of his native city to a French or an Arragonese force. The Reformation, dividing almost every European country into two parts, produced similar effects. The Catholic was too strong for the Englishman: the Huguenot for the Frenchman. The Protestant statesmen of Scotland and France accordingly called in the aid of Elizabeth; and the Papists of the League brought a Spanish army into the very heart of France. The commotions to which the French Revolution gave rise have been followed by the same consequences. The republicans in every part of Europe were eager to see the armies of the National Convention and the Directory appear among them; and exulted in defeats which distressed and humbled those whom they considered as their worst enemies, their own rulers. The princes and nobles of France, on the other hand, did their utmost to bring foreign invaders to Paris. A very short time has elapsed since the Apostolical party in Spain invoked, too successfully, the support of strangers.

The great contest, which raged in England during the seventeenth century and the earlier part of the eighteenth,

extinguished, not indeed in the body of the people, but in those classes which were most actively engaged in politics, almost all national feelings. Charles the Second, and many of his courtiers, had passed a large part of their lives in banishment, serving in foreign armies, living on the bounty of foreign treasuries, soliciting foreign aid to re-establish monarchy in their native country. The oppressed Cavaliers in England constantly looked to France and Spain for deliverance and revenge. Clarendon censures the Continental governments with great bitterness for not interfering in our internal dissensions. During the protectorate, not only the royalists, but the disaffected of all parties, appear to have been desirous of assistance from abroad. It is not strange, therefore, that amidst the furious contests which followed the Restoration, the violence of party feeling should produce effects which would probably have attended it even in an age less distinguished by laxity of principle and indelicacy of sentiment. It was not till a natural death had terminated the paralytic old age of the Jacobite party, that the evil was completely at an end. The Whigs looked to Holland; the High Tories to France. The former concluded the Barrier Treaty; some of the latter entreated the court of Versailles to send an expedition to England. Many men who, however erroneous their political notions might be, were unquestionably honourable in private life, accepted money without scruple from the foreign powers favourable to the Pretender.

Never was there less of national feeling among the higher orders than during the reign of Charles the Second. That prince, on the one side, thought it better to be the deputy of an absolute king, than the king of a free people. Algernon Sidney, on the other hand, would gladly have aided France in all her ambitious schemes, and have seen England reduced to the condition of a province, in the wild hope that a foreign despot would assist him to establish his darling republic. The king took the money of France to assist him in the enterprise which he meditated against the liberty of his subjects, with as little scruple as Frederic of Prussia or Alexander of Russia accepted our subsidies in a time of war. The leaders of the Opposition no more thought themselves disgraced by the presents of Louis, than a gentleman

of our own time thinks himself disgraced by the liberality of a powerful and wealthy member of his party who pays his election bill. The money which the king received from France had been largely employed to corrupt members of Parliament. The enemies of the court might think it fair, or even absolutely necessary, to encounter bribery with bribery. Thus they took the French gratuities, the needy among them for their own use, the rich probably for the general purposes of the party, without any scruple. If we compare their conduct, not with that of English statesmen in our own time, but with that of persons in those foreign countries which are now situated as England then was, we shall probably see reason to abate something of the severity of censure with which it has been the fashion to visit those proceedings. Yet, when every allowance is made, the transaction is sufficiently offensive. It is satisfactory to find that Lord Russel stands free from any imputation of personal participation in the spoil. An age, so miserably poor in all the moral qualities which render public characters respectable, can ill spare the credit which it derives from a man, not indeed conspicuous for talents or knowledge, but honest even in his errors, respectable in every relation of life, rationally pious, steadily and placidly brave.

The great improvement which took place in our breed of public men is principally to be ascribed to the Revolution. Yet that memorable event, in a great measure, took its character from the very vices which it was the means of reforming. It was, assuredly, a happy revolution, and a useful revolution; but it was not, what it has often been called, a glorious revolution. William, and William alone, derived glory from it. The transaction was, in almost every part, discreditable to England. That a tyrant, who had violated the fundamental laws of the country, who had attacked the rights of its greatest corporations, who had begun to persecute the established religion of the state, who had never respected the law either in his superstition or in his revenge, could not be pulled down without the aid of a foreign army, is a circumstance not very grateful to our national pride. Yet this is the least degrading part of the story. The shameless insincerity, the warm assurances of general support which James received, down to the moment of general

desertion, indicate a meanness of spirit and a looseness of morality most disgraceful to the age. That the enterprise succeeded, at least that it succeeded without bloodshed or commotion, was principally owing to an act of ungrateful perfidy, such as no soldier had ever before committed, and to those monstrous fictions respecting the birth of the Prince of Wales, which persons of the highest rank were not ashamed to circulate. In all the proceedings of the Convention, in the conference particularly, we see that littleness of mind which is the chief characteristic of the times. The resolutions on which the two Houses at last agreed were as bad as any resolutions for so excellent a purpose could be. Their feeble and contradictory language was evidently intended to save the credit of the Tories, who were ashamed to name what they were not ashamed to do. Through the whole transaction, no commanding talents were displayed by any Englishman; no extraordinary risks were run; no sacrifices were made, except the sacrifice which Churchill made of honour, and Anne of natural affection.

It was in some sense fortunate, as we have already said, for the Church of England, that the Reformation in this country was effected by men who cared little about religion. And, in the same manner, it was fortunate for our civil government that the Revolution was in a great measure effected by men who cared little about their political principles. At such a crisis, splendid talents and strong passions might have done more harm than good. There was far greater reason to fear that too much would be attempted, and that violent movements would produce an equally violent reaction, than that too little would be done in the way of change. But narrowness of intellect, and flexibility of principles, though they may be serviceable, can never be respectable.

If in the Revolution itself there was little that can properly be called glorious, there was still less in the events which followed. In a church which had as one man declared the doctrine of resistance unchristian, only four hundred persons refused to take the oath of allegiance to a government founded on resistance! In the preceding generation, both the Episcopal and the Presbyterian clergy, rather

than concede points of conscience not more important, had resigned their livings by thousands.

The churchmen, at the time of the Revolution, justified their conduct by all those profligate sophisms which are called jesuitical, and which are commonly reckoned among the peculiar sins of Popery; but which, in fact, are everywhere the anodynes employed by minds rather subtle than strong, to quiet those internal twinges which they cannot but feel, and which they will not obey. As their oath was in the teeth of their principles, so was their conduct in the teeth of their oath. Their constant machinations against the government to which they had sworn fidelity, brought a reproach on their order, and on Christianity itself. A distinguished churchman has not scrupled to say, that the rapid increase of infidelity at that time was principally produced by the disgust which the faithless conduct of his brethren excited, in men not sufficiently candid or judicious, to discern the beauties of the system amidst the vices of its ministers.

But the reproach was not confined to the church. In every political party, in the cabinet itself, duplicity and perfidy abounded. The very men whom William loaded with benefits, and in whom he reposed most confidence, with his seals of office in their hands, kept up a correspondence with the exiled family. Oxford, Carmarthen, and Shrewsbury were guilty of this odious treachery. Even Devonshire is not altogether free from suspicion. It may well be conceived that, at such a time, such a nature as that of Marlborough would riot in the very luxury of baseness. His former treason, thoroughly furnished with all that makes infamy exquisite, placed him indeed under the disadvantages which attends every artist from the time that he produces a master-piece. Yet his second great stroke may excite wonder, even in those who appreciate all the merit of the first. Lest his admirers should be able to say, that at the time of the Revolution he had betrayed his king from any other than selfish motives, he proceeded to betray his country. He sent intelligence to the French court of a secret expedition intended to attack Brest. The consequence was that the expedition failed, and that eight hundred British soldiers lost their lives from the abandoned villany of a British general. Yet this man has been canonized by so

many eminent writers, that to speak of him as he deserves may seem scarcely decent. To us he seems to be the very San Ciappelletto of the political calendar.

The reign of William the Third, as Mr. Hallam happily says, was the nadir of the national prosperity. It was also the nadir of the national character. During that period was gathered in the rank harvest of vices sown during thirty years of licentiousness and confusion; but it was also the seed-time of great virtues.

The press was emancipated from the censorship soon after the Revolution; and the government fell immediately under the censorship of the press. Statesmen had a scrutiny to endure, which was every day becoming more and more severe. The extreme violence of opinions abated. The Whigs learned moderation in office; the Tories learned the principles of liberty in opposition. The parties almost constantly approximated, often met, sometimes crossed each other. There were occasional bursts of violence; but from the time of the Revolution those bursts were constantly becoming less and less terrible. The severities with which the Tories, at the close of the reign of Anne, treated some of those who had directed public affairs during the war of the Grand Alliance, and the retaliatory measures of the Whigs after the accession of the House of Hanover, cannot be justified; but they were by no means in the style of the infuriated parties, whose alternate murders had disgraced our history towards the close of the reign of Charles the Second. At the fall of Walpole, far greater moderation was displayed. And from that time it has been the practice —a practice not strictly according to the theory of our constitution, but still most salutary—to consider the loss of office, and the public disapprobation, as punishments sufficient for errors in the administration not imputable to personal corruption. Nothing, we believe, has contributed more than this lenity to raise the character of public men. Ambition is of itself a game sufficiently hazardous and sufficiently deep to inflame the passions, without adding property, life, and liberty to the stake. Where the play runs so desperately high as in the seventeenth century, honour is at an end. Statesmen, instead of being, as they should be, at once mild and steady, are at once ferocious and inconsistent.

The axe is for ever before their eyes. A popular outcry sometimes unnerves them, and sometimes makes them desperate; it drives them to unworthy compliances, or to measures of vengeance as cruel as those which they have reason to expect. A minister in our times need not fear either to be firm or to be merciful. Our old policy in this respect was as absurd as that of the king in the Eastern Tales, who proclaimed that any physician who pleased might come to court and prescribe for his disease, but that if the remedies failed, the adventurer should lose his head. It is easy to conceive how many able men would refuse to undertake the cure on such conditions; how much the sense of extreme danger would confuse the perceptions and cloud the intellect of the practitioner at the very crisis which most called for self-possession; and how strong his temptation would be, if he found that he had committed a blunder, to escape the consequences of it by poisoning his patient.

But in fact it would have been impossible since the Revolution to punish any minister for the general course of his policy, with the slightest semblance of justice; for since that time no minister has been able to pursue any general course of policy without the approbation of the parliament. The most important effects of that great change were, as Mr. Hallam has most truly said and most ably shown, those which it indirectly produced. Thenceforward it became the interest of the executive government to protect those very doctrines which an executive government is in general inclined to persecute. The sovereign, the ministers, the courtiers, at last even the universities and the clergy, were changed into advocates of the right of resistance. In the theory of the Whigs, in the situation of the Tories, in the common interest of all public men, the parliamentary constitution of the country found perfect security. The power of the House of Commons, in particular, has been steadily on the increase. By the practice of granting supplies for short terms, and appropriating them to particular services, it has rendered its approbation as necessary in practice to all the measures of the executive government, as it is in theory to a legislative act.

Mr. Hallam appears to have begun with the reign of Henry the Seventh, as the period at which what is called

modern history, in contradistinction to the history of the middle ages, is generally supposed to commence. He has stopped at the accession of George the Third, "from unwillingness," as he says, "to excite the prejudices of modern politics, especially those connected with personal character." These two eras, we think, deserved the distinction on other grounds. Our remote posterity, when looking back on our history in that comprehensive manner in which remote posterity alone can, without much danger of error, look back on it, will probably observe those points with peculiar interest. They are, if we mistake not, the beginning and the end of an entire and separate chapter in our annals. The period which lies between them is a perfect cycle, a great year of the public mind.

In the reign of Henry the Seventh, all the political differences which had agitated England since the Norman conquest seemed to be set at rest. The long and fierce struggle between the crown and the barons had terminated. The grievances which had produced the rebellions of Tyler and Cade had disappeared. Villanage was scarcely known. The two royal houses whose conflicting claims had long convulsed the kingdom, were at length united. The claimants whose pretensions, just or unjust, had disturbed the new settlement, were overthrown. In religion there was no open dissent, and probably very little secret heresy. The old subjects of contention, in short, had vanished; those which were to succeed had not yet appeared.

Soon, however, new principles were announced—principles which were destined to keep England during two centuries and a half in a state of commotion. The Reformation divided the people into two great parties. The Protestants were victorious; they again subdivided themselves. Political systems were engrafted on theological doctrines. The mutual animosities of the two parties gradually emerged into the light of public life. First came conflicts in parliament; then civil war; then revolutions upon revolutions, each attended by its appurtenance of proscriptions, and persecutions, and tests; each followed by severe measures on the part of the conquerors; each exciting a deadly and festering hatred in the conquered. During the reign of George the Second, things were evidently tending to repose. At the

close of it the nation had completed the great revolution which commenced in the early part of the sixteenth century, and was again at rest. The fury of sects had died away. The Catholics themselves practically enjoyed toleration; and more than toleration they did not yet venture even to desire. Jacobitism was a mere name. Nobody was left to fight for that wretched cause, and very few to drink for it. The constitution, purchased so dearly, was on every side extolled and worshipped. Even those distinctions of party which must almost always be found in a free state, could scarcely be traced. The two great bodies which from the time of the Revolution had been gradually tending to approximation, were now united in emulous support of that splendid administration which smote to the dust both the branches of the House of Bourbon. The great battle for our ecclesiastical and civil polity had been fought and won; the wounds had been healed; the victors and the vanquished were rejoicing together. Every person acquainted with the political writers of the last generation, will recollect the terms in which they generally speak of that time. It was a glimpse of a golden age of union and glory—a short interval of rest, which had been preceded by centuries of agitation, and which centuries of agitation were destined to follow.

How soon faction again began to ferment, is well known. In the Letters of Junius, in Burke's Thoughts on the Cause of the Discontents, and in many other writings of less merit, the violent dissensions which speedily convulsed the country are imputed to the system of favouritism which George the Third introduced, to the influence of Bute, or the profligacy of those who called themselves the king's friends. With all deference to the eminent writers to whom we have referred, we may venture to say that they lived too near the events of which they treated to judge of them correctly. The schism which was then appearing in the nation, and which has been from that time almost constantly widening, had little in common with those which had divided it during the reigns of the Tudors and the Stuarts. The symptoms of popular feeling, indeed, will always in a great measure be the same; but the principle which excited that feeling was here new. The support which was given to Wilkes, the clamour for reform during the American war, the dis-

affected conduct of large classes of people at the time of the French Revolution, no more resembled the opposition which had been offered to the government of Charles the Second, than that opposition resembled the contest between the Roses.

In the political as in the natural body, a sensation is often referred to a part widely different from that in which it really resides. A man whose leg is cut off fancies that he feels a pain in his toe; and in the same manner the people, in the earlier part of the late reign sincerely attributed their discontent to grievances which had been effectually lopped off. They imagined that the prerogative was too strong for the constitution, that the principles of the Revolution were abandoned, and the system of the Stuarts restored. Every impartial man must now acknowledge that these charges were groundless. The proceedings of the government with respect to the Middlesex election would have been contemplated with delight by the first generation of Whigs. They would have thought it a splendid triumph of the cause of liberty, that the king and the lords should resign to the House of Commons a portion of their legislative power, and allow it to incapacitate without their consent. This, indeed, Mr. Burke clearly perceived. "When the House of Commons," says he, "in an endeavour to obtain new advantages at the expense of the other orders of the state, for the benefit of the commons at large, have pursued strong measures, if it were not just, it was at least natural, that the constituents should connive at all their proceedings, because we ourselves were ultimately to profit. But when this submission is urged to us in *a contest between the representatives and ourselves*, and where nothing can be put into their scale which is not taken from ours, they fancy us to be children when they tell us that they are our representatives, our own flesh and blood, and that all the stripes they give us are for our good." These sentences contain, in fact, the whole explanation of the mystery. The conflict of the seventeenth century was maintained by the parliament against the crown. The conflict which commenced in the middle of the eighteenth century, which still remains undecided, and in which our children and grandchildren will probably be called to act or suffer, is between a large portion of the people on the

one side, and the crown and the parliament united on the other.

The privileges of the House of Commons, those privileges which in 1642 all London rose in arms to defend, which the people considered as synonymous with their own liberties, and in comparison with which they took no account of the most precious and sacred principles of English jurisprudence, have now become nearly as odious as the rigours of martial law. That power of committing, which the people anciently loved to see the House of Commons exercise, is now, at least when employed against libellers, the most unpopular power in the constitution. If the Commons were to suffer the Lords to amend money-bills, we do not believe that the people would care one straw about the matter. If they were to suffer the Lords even to originate money-bills, we doubt whether such a surrender of their constitutional rights would excite half so much dissatisfaction as the exclusion of strangers from a single important discussion. The gallery in which the reporters sit has become a fourth estate of the realm. The publication of the debates, a practice which seemed to the most liberal statesmen of the old school full of danger to the great safeguards of public liberty, is now regarded by many persons as a safeguard, tantamount, and more than tantamount, to all the rest together.

Burke, in a speech on parliamentary reform, which is the more remarkable because it was delivered long before the French revolution, has described, in striking language, the change in public feeling of which we speak. "It suggests melancholy reflections," says he, "in consequence of the strange course we have long held, that we are now no longer quarrelling about the character or about the conduct of men, or the tenor of measures; but we are grown out of humour with the English constitution itself; this is become the object of the animosity of Englishmen. This constitution in former days used to be the envy of the world; it was the pattern for politicians, the theme of the eloquent, the meditation of the philosopher in every part of the world. As to Englishmen, it was their pride, their consolation. By it they lived, and for it they were ready to die. Its defects, if it had any, were partly covered by partiality, and partly borne by prudence. Now all its excellencies are forgot, its

faults are forcibly dragged into day, exaggerated by every artifice of misrepresentation. It is despised and rejected of men, and every device and invention of ingenuity or idleness is set up in opposition or in preference to it." We neither adopt nor condemn the language of reprobation which the great orator here employs; we call him only as witness to the fact. That the revolution of public feeling which he described was then in progress, is indisputable; and it is equally indisputable, we think, that it is in progress still.

To investigate and classify the cause of so great a change, would require far more thought and far more space, than we at present have to bestow. But some of them are obvious. During the contest which the parliament carried on against the Stuarts, it had only to check and complain; it has since had to govern. As an attacking body, it could select its points of attacks, and it naturally chose those on which it was likely to receive public support. As a ruling body, it has neither the same liberty of choice nor the same interest to gratify the people. With the power of an executive government, it has drawn to itself some of the vices and all the unpopularity of an executive government. On the House of Commons above all, possessed as it is of the public purse, and consequently of the public sword, the nation throws all the blame of an ill-conducted war, of a blundering negotiation, of a disgraceful treaty, of an embarrassing commercial crisis. The delays of the Court of Chancery, the misconduct of a judge at Van Diemen's Land, any thing, in short, which in any part of the administration any person feels as a grievance, is attributed to the tyranny, or at least to the negligence of that all-powerful body. Private individuals pester it with their wrongs and claims. A merchant appeals to it from the courts of Rio Janeiro or St. Petersburg. A painter, who can find nobody to buy the acre of spoiled canvas which he calls an historical picture, pours into its sympathizing ear the whole story of his debts and his jealousies. Anciently the parliament resembled a member of opposition, from whom no places are expected, who is not required to confer favours and propose measures, but merely to watch and censure; and who may, therefore, unless he is grossly injudicious, be popular with the great body

of the community. The parliament *now* resembles the same person put into office, surrounded by petitioners, whom twenty times his patronage would not satisfy, stunned with complaints, buried in memorials, compelled by the duties of his station to bring forward measures similar to those which he was formerly accustomed to observe and to check, and perpetually encountered by objections similar to those which it was formerly his business to raise.

Perhaps it may be laid down as a general rule, that a legislative assembly, not constituted on democratic principles, cannot be popular long after it ceases to be weak. Its zeal for what the people, rightly or wrongly, conceive to be their interest, its sympathy with their mutable and violent passions, are merely the effects of the particular circumstances in which it is placed. As long as it depends for existence on the public favour, it will employ all the means in its power to conciliate that favour. While this is the case, defects in its constitution are of little consequence. But as the close union of such a body with the nation is the effect of an identity of interest, not essential, but accidental, it is in some measure dissolved from the time at which the danger which produced it ceases to exist.

Hence before the Revolution, the question of parliamentary reform was of very little importance. The friends of liberty had no very ardent wish for it. The strongest Tories saw no objections to it. It is remarkable that Clarendon loudly applauds the changes which Cromwell introduced, changes far stronger than the Whigs of the present day would in general approve. There is no reason to think, however, that the reform effected by Cromwell made any great difference in the conduct of the Parliament. Indeed, if the House of Commons had, during the reign of Charles the Second, been elected by universal suffrage, or if all the seats had been put up to sale, as in the French Parliaments, it would, we suspect, have acted very much as it did. We know how strongly the Parliament of Paris exerted itself in favour of the people on many important occasions; and the reason is evident. Though it did not emanate from the people, its whole consequence depended on the support of the people. From the time of the Revolution the House of Commons was gradually becoming what it now is—a great

council of state, containing many members chosen freely by the people, and many others anxious to acquire the favour of the people; but, on the whole, aristocratical in its temper and interest. It is very far from being an illiberal and stupid oligarchy; but it is equally far from being an express image of the general feeling. It is influenced by the opinion of the people, and influenced powerfully, but slowly and circuitously. Instead of outrunning the public mind, as before the Revolution it frequently did, it now follows with slow steps and at a wide distance. It is therefore necessarily unpopular; and the more so, because the good which it produces is much less evident to common perception than the evil which it inflicts. It bears the blame of all the mischief which is done, or supposed to be done, by its authority or by its connivance. It does not get the credit, on the other hand, of having prevented those innumerable abuses, which do not exist solely because the House of Commons exists.

A large part of the nation is certainly desirous of a reform in the representative system. How large that part may be, and how strong its desires on the subject may be, it is difficult to say. It is only at intervals that the clamour on the subject is loud and vehement. But it seems to us that, during the remissions, the feeling gathers strength, and that every successive burst is more violent than that which preceded it. The public attention may be for a time diverted to the Catholic claims or the Mercantile code; but it is probable that at no very distant period, perhaps in the lifetime of the present generation, all other questions will merge in that which is, in a certain degree, connected with them all.

Already we seem to ourselves to perceive the signs of unquiet times, the vague presentiment of something great and strange which pervades the community; the restless and turbid hopes of those who have every thing to gain, the dimly hinted forebodings of those who have every thing to lose. Many indications might be mentioned, in themselves indeed as insignificant as straws; but even the direction of a straw, to borrow the illustration of Bacon, will show from what quarter the hurricane is setting in.

A great statesman might, by judicious and timely refor-

mations, by reconciling the two great branches of the natural aristocracy, the capitalists and the land owners, by so widening the base of the government as to interest in its defence the whole of the middling class, that brave, honest, and sound-hearted class, which is as anxious for the maintenance of order, and the security of property, as it is hostile to corruption and oppression, succeed in averting a struggle to which no national friend of liberty or of law can look forward without great apprehensions. There are those who will be contented with nothing but demolition; and there are those who shrink from all repair. There are innovators who long for a President and a National Convention; and there are bigots who, while cities larger and richer than the capitals of many great kingdoms are calling out for representatives to watch over their interests, select some hackneyed jobber in boroughs, some peer of the narrowest and smallest mind, as the fittest depository of a forfeited franchise. Between these extremes there lies a more excellent way. Time is bringing around another crisis analogous to that which occurred in the seventeenth century. We stand in a situation similar to that in which our ancestors stood under the reign of James the First. It will soon again be necessary to reform, that we may preserve; to save the fundamental principles of the constitution, by alterations in the subordinate parts. It will then be possible, as it was possible two hundred years ago, to protect vested rights, to secure every useful institution—every institution endeared by antiquity and noble associations; and, at the same time, to introduce into the system improvements harmonizing with the original plan. It remains to be seen whether two hundred years have made us wiser.

We know of no great revolution which might not have been prevented by compromise early and graciously made. Firmness is a great virtue in public affairs; but it has its proper sphere. Conspiracies and insurrrections in which small minorities are engaged, the outbreakings of popular violence unconnected with any extensive project or any durable principle, are best repressed by vigour and decision. To shrink from them is to make them formidable. But no wise ruler will confound the pervading taint with the slight local irritation. No wise ruler will treat the deeply seated

discontents of a great party as he treats the conduct of a mob which destroys mills and power-looms. The neglect of this distinction has been fatal even to governments strong in the power of the sword. The present time is indeed a time of peace and order. But it is at such a time that fools are most thoughtless, and wise men most thoughtful. That the discontents which have agitated the country during the late and the present reign, and which, though not always noisy, are never wholly dormant, will again break forth with aggravated symptoms, is almost as certain as that the tides and seasons will follow their appointed course. But in all movements of the human mind which tend to great revolutions there is a crisis at which moderate concession may amend, conciliate, and preserve. Happy will it be for England if, at that crisis, her interests be confided to men for whom history has not recorded the long series of human crimes and follies in vain.

Southey's Colloquies on Society.*

[*Edinburgh Review.*]

It would be scarcely possible for a man of Mr. Southey's talents and acquirements to write two volumes as large as those before us, which should be wholly destitute of information and amusement. Yet we do not remember to have read with so little satisfaction any equal quantity of matter, written by any man of real abilities. We have, for some time past, observed with great regret the strange infatuation which leads the Poet-laureate to abandon those departments of literature in which he might excel, and to lecture the public on sciences of which he has still the very alphabet to learn. He has now, we think, done his worst. The subject which he has at last undertaken to treat is one which demands all the highest intellectual and moral qualities of a philosophical statesman—an understanding at once comprehensive and acute—a heart at once upright and charitable. Mr. Southey brings to the task two faculties which were never, we believe, vouchsafed in measure so copious to any human being; the faculty of believing without a reason, and the faculty of hating without a provocation.

It is, indeed, most extraordinary that a mind like Mr. Southey's, a mind richly endowed in many respects by nature, and highly cultivated by study, a mind which has exercised considerable influence on the most enlightened generation of the most enlightened people that ever existed, should be utterly destitute of the power of discerning truth from

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* *Sir Thomas More; or, Colloquies on the Progress and Prospects of Society.* By Robert Southey, Esq., LL.D., Poet-laureate. 2 vols. 8vo. London. 1829.

falsehood. Yet such is the fact. Government is to Mr. Southey one of the fine arts. He judges of a theory or a public measure, of a religion, a political party, a peace or a war, as men judge of a picture or a statue, by the effect produced on his imagination. A chain of associations is to him what a chain of reasoning is to other men; and what he calls his opinions are, in fact, merely his tastes.

Part of this description might, perhaps, apply to a much greater man, Mr. Burke. But Mr. Burke, assuredly, possessed an understanding admirably fitted for the investigation of truth—an understanding stronger than that of any statesman, active or speculative, of the eighteenth century —stronger than every thing, except his own fierce and ungovernable sensibility. Hence, he generally chose his side like a fanatic, and defended it like a philosopher. His conduct, in the most important events of his life, at the time of the impeachment of Hastings, for example, and at the time of the French Revolution, seems to have been prompted by those feelings and motives which Mr. Coleridge has so happily described:

> "Stormy pity, and the cherish'd lure
> Of pomp, and proud precipitance of soul."

Hindostan, with its vast cities, its gorgeous pagodas, its infinite swarms of dusky population, its long-descended dynasties, its stately etiquette, excited in a mind so capacious, so imaginative, and so susceptible, the most intense interest. The peculiarities of the costume, of the manners and of the laws, the very mystery which hung over the language and origin of the people seized his imagination. To plead in Westminster Hall, in the name of the English people, at the bar of the English nobles, for great nations and kings separated from him by half the world, seemed to him the height of human glory. Again, it is not difficult to perceive that his hostility to the French Revolution principally arose from the vexation which he felt at having all his old political associations disturbed, at seeing the well-known boundary marks of states obliterated, and the names and distinctions with which the history of Europe had been filled for ages swept away. He felt like an antiquary whose

shield had been scoured, or a connoisseur who found his Titian retouched. But however he came by an opinion, he had no sooner got it than he did his best to make out a legitimate title to it. His reason, like a spirit in the service of an enchanter, though spell-bound, was still mighty. It did whatever work his passions and his imagination might impose. But it did that work, however arduous, with marvellous dexterity and vigour. His course was not determined by argument; but he could defend the wildest course by arguments more plausible than those by which common men support opinions which they have adopted, after the fullest deliberation. Reason has scarcely ever displayed, even in those well-constituted minds of which she occupies the throne so much power and energy as in the lowest offices of that imperial servitude.

Now, in the mind of Mr. Southey, reason has no place at all, as either leader or follower, as either sovereign or slave. He does not seem to know what an argument is. He never uses arguments himself. He never troubles himself to answer the arguments of his opponents. It has never occurred to him, that a man ought to be able to give some better account of the way in which he has arrived at his opinions, than merely that it is his will and pleasure to hold them, that there is a difference between assertion and demonstration, that a rumour does not always prove a fact, that a fact does not always prove a theory, that two contradictory propositions cannot be undeniable truths, that to beg the question is not the way to settle it, or that when an objection is raised, it ought to be met with something more convincing than "scoundrel" and "blockhead."

It would be absurd to read the works of such a writer for political instruction. The utmost that can be expected from any system promulgated by him is, that it may be splendid and affecting, that it may suggest sublime and pleasing images. His scheme of philosophy is a mere daydream, a poetical creation, like the Domdaniel caverns, the Swerga, or Padalon; and, indeed, it bears no inconsiderable resemblance to those gorgeous visions. Like them, it has something of invention, grandeur, and brilliancy. But, like them, it is grotesque and extravagant, and perpetually

violates that conventional probability which is essential to the effect even of works of art.

The warmest admirers of Mr. Southey will scarcely, we think, deny that his success has almost always borne an inverse proportion to the degree in which his undertakings have required a logical head. His poems, taken in the mass, stand far higher than his prose works. The Laureate Odes, indeed, among which the Vision of Judgment must be classed, are, for the most part, worse than Pye's and as bad as Cibber's; nor do we think him generally happy in short pieces. But his longer poems, though full of faults, are nevertheless very extraordinary productions. We doubt greatly whether they will be read fifty years hence; but that, if they are read, they will be admired, we have no doubt whatever.

But though in general we prefer Mr. Southey's poetry to his prose, we must make one exception. The Life of Nelson is, beyond all doubt, the most perfect and the most delightful of his works. The fact is, as his poems most abundantly prove, that he is by no means so skilful in designing as filling up. It was therefore an advantage to him to be furnished with an outline of characters and events, and to have no other task to perform than that of touching the cold sketch into life. No writer, perhaps, ever lived, whose talents so precisely qualified him to write the history of the great naval warrior. There were no fine riddles of the human heart to read, no theories to found, no hidden causes to develope, no remote consequences to predict. The character of the hero lay on the surface. The exploits were brilliant and picturesque. The necessity of adhering to the real course of events saved Mr. Southey from those faults which deform the original plan of almost every one of his poems, and which even his innumerable beauties of detail scarcely redeem. The subject did not require the exercise of those reasoning powers, the want of which is the blemish of his prose. It would not be easy to find, in all literary history, an instance of a more exact hit between wind and water. John Wesley, and the Peninsular War, were subjects of a very different kind,—subjects which required all the qualities of a philosophic historian. In Mr. Southey's works on these subjects he has, on the whole, failed. Yet

there are charming specimens of the art of narration in both of them. The Life of Wesley will probably live. Defective as it is, it contains the only popular account of a most remarkable moral revolution, and of a man whose eloquence and logical acuteness might have rendered him eminent in literature, whose genius for government was not inferior to that of Richelieu, and who, whatever his errors may have been, devoted all his powers, in defiance of obloquy and derision, to what he sincerely considered as the highest good of his species. The History of the Peninsular War is already dead: indeed the second volume was dead-born. The glory of producing an imperishable record of that great conflict seems to be reserved for Colonel Napier.

The Book of the Church contains some stories very prettily told. The rest is mere rubbish. The adventure was manifestly one which could be achieved only by a profound thinker, and in which even a profound thinker might have failed, unless his passions had been kept under strict control. In all those works in which Mr. Southey has completely abandoned narration, and undertaken to argue moral and political questions, his failure has been complete and ignominious. On such occasions, his writings are rescued from utter contempt and derision, solely by the beauty and purity of the English. We find, we confess, so great a charm in Mr. Southey's style, that, even when he writes nonsense, we generally read it with pleasure, except indeed where he tries to be droll. A more insufferable jester never existed. He very often attempts to be humorous, and yet we do not remember a single occasion on which he has succeeded further than to be quaintly and flippantly dull. In one of his works, he tells us that Bishop Sprat was very properly so called, inasmuch as he was a very small poet. And in the book now before us, he cannot quote Francis Bugg without a remark on his unsavory name. A man might talk folly like this by his own fireside; but that any human being, after having made such a joke, should write it down, and copy it out, and transmit it to the printer, and correct the proof-sheets, and send it forth into the world, is enough to make us ashamed of our species.

The extraordinary bitterness of spirit which Mr. Southey manifests towards his opponents is, no doubt, in a great

measure to be attributed to the manner in which he forms his opinions. Differences of taste, it has often been remarked, produce greater exasperation than differences on points of science. But this is not all. A peculiar austerity marks almost all Mr. Southey's judgments of men and actions. We are far from blaming him for fixing on a high standard of morals, and for applying that standard to every case. But rigour ought to be accompanied by discernment, and of discernment Mr. Southy seems to be utterly destitute. His mode of judging is monkish; it is exactly what we should expect from a stern old Benedictine, who had been preserved from many ordinary frailties by the restraints of his situation. No man out of a cloister ever wrote about love, for example, so coldly and at the same time so grossly. His descriptions of it are just what we should hear from a recluse, who knew the passion only from the details of the confessional. Almost all his heroes make love either like seraphim or like cattle. He seems to have no notion of any thing between the Platonic passion of the Glendoveer, who gazes with rapture on his mistress's leprosy, and the brutal appetite of Arvalan and Roderick. In Roderick, indeed, the two characters are united. He is first all clay, and then all spirit, he goes forth a Tarquin, and comes back too ethereal to be married. The only love-scene, as far as we can recollect, in Madoc, consists of the delicate attentions which a savage, who has drunk too much of the prince's metheglin, offers to Goervyl. It would be the labour of a week to find, in all the vast mass of Mr. Southey's poetry, a single passage indicating any sympathy with those feelings which have consecrated the shades of Vaucluse and the rocks of Meillerie.

Indeed, if we except some very pleasing images of paternal tenderness and filial duty, there is scarcely any thing soft or humane in Mr. Southey's poetry. What theologians call the spiritual sins are his cardinal virtues—hatred, pride, and the insatiable thirst of vengeance. These passions he disguises under the name of duties; he purifies them from the alloy of vulgar interests; he ennobles them by uniting them with energy, fortitude, and a severe sanctity of manners, and then holds them up to the admiration of mankind. This is the spirit of Thalaba, of Ladurlad, of Adosinda, of

Roderick after his regeneration. It is the spirit which, in all his writings, Mr. Southey appears to effect. "I do well to be angry," seems to be the predominant feeling of his mind. Almost the only mark of charity which he vouchsafes to his opponents, is to pray for their conversion; and this he does in terms not unlike those in which we can imagine a Portuguese priest interceding with Heaven for a Jew delivered over to the secular arm after a relapse.

We have always heard, and fully believe, that Mr. Southey is a very amiable and humane man; nor do we intend to apply to him personally any of the remarks which we have made on the spirit of his writings. Such are the caprices of human nature. Even Uncle Toby troubled himself very little about the French grenadiers who fell on the glacis of Namur. And when Mr. Southey takes up his pen, he changes his nature as much as Captain Shandy when he girt on his sword. The only opponents to whom he gives quarter are those in whom he finds something of his own character reflected. He seems to have an instinctive antipathy for calm, moderate men—for men who shun extremes, and who render reasons. He has treated Mr. Owen of Lanark, for example, with infinitely more respect than he has shown to Mr. Hallam or to Dr. Lingard; and this for no reason that we can discover, except that Mr. Owen is more unreasonably and hopelessly in the wrong than any speculator of our time.

Mr. Southey's political system is just what we might expect from a man who regards politics, not as a matter of science, but as a matter of taste and feeling. All his schemes of government have been inconsistent with themselves. In his youth he was a republican; yet, as he tells us in his preface to these Colloquies, he was even then opposed to the Catholic claims. He is now a violent Ultra-Tory. Yet, while he maintains with vehemence approaching to ferocity, all the sterner and harsher parts of the Ultra-Tory theory of government, the baser and dirtier part of that theory disgusts him. Exclusion, persecution, severe punishments for libellers and demagogues, proscriptions, massacres, civil war, if necessary, rather than any concession to a discontented people—these are the measures which he seems inclined to recommend. A severe and

gloomy tyranny, crushing opposition, silencing remonstrance, drilling the minds of the people into unreasoning obedience, has in it something of grandeur which delights his imagination. But there is nothing fine in the shabby tricks and jobs of office. And Mr. Southey, accordingly, has no toleration for them. When a democrat, he did not perceive that his system led logically, and would have led practically, to the removal of religious distinctions. He now commits a similar error. He renounces the abject and paltry part of the creed of his party, without perceiving that it is also an essential part of that creed. He would have tyranny and purity together; though the most superficial observation might have shown him that there can be no tyranny without corruption.

It is high time, however, that we should proceed to the consideration of the work, which is our more immediate subject, and which, indeed, illustrates in almost every page our general remarks on Mr. Southey's writings. In the preface, we are informed that the author, notwithstanding some statements to the contrary, was always opposed to the Catholic claims. We fully believe this; both because we are sure that Mr. Southey is incapable of publishing a deliberate falsehood, and because his averment is in itself probable. It is exactly what we should have expected that, even in his wildest paroxysms of democratic enthusiasm, Mr. Southey would have felt no wish to see a simple remedy applied to a great practical evil; that the only measure, which all the great statesmen of two generations have agreed with each other in supporting, would be the only measure which Mr. Southey would have agreed with himself in opposing. He had passed from one extreme of political opinion to another, as Satan in Milton went round the globe, contriving constantly to "ride with darkness." Wherever the thickest shadow of the night may at any moment chance to fall, there is Mr. Southey. It is not everybody who could have so dexterously avoided blundering on the daylight in the course of a journey to the Antipodes.

Mr. Southey has not been fortunate in the plan of any of his fictitious narratives. But he has never failed so conspicuously, as in the work before us; except, indeed, in the wretched Vision of Judgment. In November, 1817, it seems,

the Laureate was sitting over his newspaper, and meditating about the death of the Princess Charlotte. An elderly person, of very dignified aspect, makes his appearance, announces himself as a stranger from a distant country, and apologizes very politely for not having provided himself with letters of introduction. Mr. Southey supposes his visitor to be some American gentleman, who has come to see the lakes and the lake-poets, and accordingly proceeds to perform, with that grace which only long experience can give, all the duties which authors owe to starers. He assures his guest that some of the most agreeable visits which he has received have been from Americans, and that he knows men among them whose talents and virtues would do honour to any country. In passing, we may observe, to the honour of Mr. Southey, that, though he evidently has no liking for the American institutions, he never speaks of the people of the United States with that pitiful affectation of contempt, by which some members of his party have done more than wars or tariffs can do to excite mutual enmity between two communities formed for mutual friendship. Great as the faults of his mind are, paltry spite like this has no place in it. Indeed, it is scarcely conceivable that a man of his sensibility and his imagination should look without pleasure and national pride on the vigorous and splendid youth of a great people, whose veins are filled with our blood, whose minds are nourished with our literature, and on whom is entailed the rich inheritance of our civilization, our freedom, and our glory.

But we must now return to Mr. Southey's study at Keswick. The visitor informs the hospitable poet that he is not an American, but a spirit. Mr. Southey, with more frankness than civility, tells him that he is a very queer one. The stranger holds out his hand. It has neither weight nor substance. Mr. Southey upon this becomes more serious; his hair stands on end; and he adjures the spectre to tell him what he is, and why he comes. The ghost turns out to be Sir Thomas More. The traces of martyrdom, it seems, are worn in the other world, as stars and ribands are worn in this. Sir Thomas shows the poet a red streak round his neck, brighter than a ruby, and informs him that Cranmer wears a suit of flames in Paradise, the right-hand glove, we suppose, of peculiar brilliancy.

Sir Thomas pays but a short visit on this occasion, but promises to cultivate the new acquaintance which he has formed, and, after begging that his visit may be kept secret from Mrs. Southey, vanishes into air.

The rest of the book consists of conversations between Mr. Southey and the spirit, about trade, currency, Catholic emancipation, periodical literature, female nunneries, butchers, snuff, book-stalls, and a hundred other subjects. Mr. Southey very hospitably takes an opportunity to lionize the ghost round the lakes, and directs his attention to the most beautiful points of view. Why a spirit was to be evoked for the purpose of talking over such matters, and seeing such sights, why the vicar of the parish, a blue-stocking from London, or an American, such as Mr. Southey supposed his aërial visiter to be, might not have done as well, we are unable to conceive. Sir Thomas tells Mr. Southey nothing about future events, and indeed absolutely disclaims the gift of prescience. He has learned to talk modern English: he has read all the new publications, and loves a jest as well as when he jested with the executioner, though we cannot say that the quality of his wit has materially improved in Paradise. His powers of reasoning, too, are by no means in as great vigour as when he sate on the woolsack; and though he boasts that he is "divested of all those passions which cloud the intellects and warp the understandings of men," we think him, we must confess, far less stoical than formerly. As to revelations, he tells Mr. Southey at the outset to expect none from him. The laureate expresses some doubts, which assuredly will not raise him in the opinion of our modern millenarians, as to the divine authority of the Apocalypse. But the ghost preserves an impenetrable silence. As far as we remember, only one hint about the employments of disimbodied spirits escapes him. He encourages Mr. Southey to hope that there is a Paradise Press, at which all the valuable publications of Mr. Murray and Mr. Colburn are reprinted as regularly as at Philadelphia; and delicately insinuates, that Thalaba and the Curse of Kehama are among the number. What a contrast does this absurd fiction present to those charming narratives which Plato and Cicero prefix to their dialogues! What cost in machinery, yet what poverty of effect! A ghost brought in to say what any man might have

said! The glorified spirit of a great statesman and philosopher dawdling, like a bilious old nabob at a watering-place, over quarterly reviews and novels, dropping in to pay long calls, making excursions in search of the picturesque! The scene of St. George and St. Denys in the Pucelle is hardly more ridiculous. We know what Voltaire meant. Nobody, however, can suppose that Mr. Southey means to make game of the mysteries of a higher state of existence. The fact is, that in the work before us, in the Vision of Judgment, and in some of his other pieces, his mode of treating the most solemn subjects differs from that of open scoffers, only as the extravagant representations of sacred persons and things in some grotesque Italian paintings differ from the caricatures which Carlile exposes in the front of his shop. We interpret the particular act by the general character. What in the window of a convicted blasphemer we call blasphemous, we call only absurd and ill-judged in an altar-piece.

We now come to the conversations which pass between Mr. Southey and Sir Thomas More, or rather between two Southeys equally eloquent, equally angry, equally unreasonable, and equally given to talking about what they do not understand. Perhaps we could not select a better instance of the spirit which pervades the whole book than the discussion touching butchers. These persons are represented as castaways, as men whose employment hebetates the faculties and hardens the heart. Not that the poet has any scruples about the use of animal food. He acknowledges that it is for the good of the animals themselves that men should feed upon them. "Nevertheless," says he, "I cannot but acknowledge, like good old John Fox, that the sight of a slaughter-house or shambles, if it does not disturb this clear conviction, excites in me uneasiness and pain, as well as loathing. And that they produce a worse effect upon the persons employed in them, is a fact acknowledged by the law or custom which excludes such persons from sitting on juries upon cases of life and death."

This is a fair specimen of Mr. Southey's mode of looking at all moral questions. Here is a body of men, engaged in an employment, which, by his own account, is beneficial, not only to mankind, but to the very creatures on whom we feed Yet he represents them as men who are necessarily

reprobates, as men who must necessarily be reprobates even in the most improved state of society, even, to use his own phrase, in a Christian Utopia. And what reasons are given for a judgment so directly opposed to every principle of sound and manly morality? Merely this, that he cannot abide the sight of their apparatus; that, from certain peculiar associations, he is affected with disgust when he passes by their shops. He gives, indeed, another reason; a certain law or custom, which never existed but in the imaginations of old women, and which, if it had existed, would have proved just as much against butchers as the ancient prejudice against the practice of taking interest for money proves against the merchants of England. Is a surgeon a castaway? We believe that nurses, when they instruct children in that venerable law or custom which Mr. Southey so highly approves, generally join the surgeon to the butcher. A dissecting-room would, we should think, affect the nerves of most people as much as a butcher's shambles. But the most amusing circumstance is, that Mr. Southey, who detests a butcher, should look with special favour on a soldier. He seems highly to approve of the sentiment of General Meadows, who swore that a grenadier was the highest character in this world or in the next: and assures us that a virtuous soldier is placed in the situation which most tends to his improvement, and will most promote his eternal interests. Human blood, indeed, is by no means an object of so much loathing to Mr. Southey, as the hides and paunches of cattle. In 1814, he poured forth poetical maledictions on all who talked of peace with Bonaparte. He went over the field of Waterloo, a field beneath which twenty thousand of the stoutest hearts that ever beat are mouldering, and came back in an ecstasy, which he mistook for poetical inspiration. In most of his poems, particularly in his best poem, Roderick, and in most of his prose works, particularly in The History of the Peninsular War, he shows a delight in snuffing up carnage, which would not have misbecome a Scandinavian bard, but which sometimes seems to harmonize ill with the Christian morality. We do not, however, blame Mr. Southey for exulting, even a little ferociously, in the brave deeds of his countrymen, or for finding something "comely and reviving" in the bloody vengeance inflicted by

an oppressed people on its oppressors. Now, surely, if we find that a man whose business is to kill Frenchmen may be humane, we may hope that means may be found to render a man humane whose business is to kill sheep. If the brutalizing effect of such scenes as the storming of St. Sebastian may be counteracted, we may hope that, in a Christian Utopia, some minds might be proof against the kennels and dresses of Aldgate. Mr. Southey's feeling, however, is easily explained. A butcher's knife is by no means so elegant as a sabre, and a calf does not bleed with half the grace of a poor wounded hussar.

It is in the same manner that Mr. Southey appears to have formed his opinions of the manufacturing system. There is nothing which he hates so bitterly. It is, according to him, a system more tyrannical than that of the feudal ages, a system of actual servitude, a system which destroys the bodies and degrades the minds of those who are engaged in it. He expresses a hope that the competition of other nations may drive us out of the field; that our foreign trade may decline, and that we may thus enjoy a restoration of national sanity and strength. But he seems to think that the extermination of the whole manufacturing population would be a blessing, if the evil could be removed in no other way.

Mr. Southey does not bring forward a single fact in support of these views, and, as it seems to us, there are facts which lead to a very different conclusion. In the first place, the poor-rate is very decidedly lower in the manufacturing than in the agricultural districts. If Mr. Southey will look over the Parliamentary returns on this subject, he will find that the amount of parish relief required by the labourers in the different counties of England is almost exactly in inverse proportion to the degree in which the manufacturing system has been introduced into those counties. The returns for the year ending in March, 1825, and in March, 1828, are now before us. In the former year, we find the poor-rates highest in Sussex—about 20*s.* to every inhabitant. Then come Buckinghamshire, Essex, Suffolk, Bedfordshire, Huntingdonshire, Kent, and Norfolk. In all these the rate is above 15*s.* a head. We will not go through the whole. Even in Westmorland, and the North Riding of

Yorkshire, the rate is at more than 8*s*. In Cumberland and Monmouthshire, the most fortunate of all the agricultural districts, it is at 6*s*. But in the West Riding of Yorkshire, it is as low as 5*s*.; and when we come to Lancashire, we find it at 4*s*., one-fifth of what it is in Sussex. The returns of the year ending in March, 1828, are a little, and but a little, more unfavourable to the manufacturing districts. Lancashire, even in that season of distress, required a smaller poor-rate than any other district, and little more than one-fourth of the poor-rate raised in Sussex. Cumberland alone, of the agricultural districts, was as well off as the West Riding of Yorkshire. These facts seem to indicate that the manufacturer is both in a more comfortable and in a less dependent situation than the agricultural labourer.

As to the effect of the manufacturing system on the bodily health, we must beg leave to estimate it by a standard far too low and vulgar for a mind so imaginative as that of Mr. Southey, the proportion of births and deaths. We know that, during the growth of this atrocious system, this new misery, (we use the phrase of Mr. Southey,) this new enormity, this birth of a portentous age, this pest, which no man can approve whose heart is not seared, or whose understanding has not been darkened, there has been a great diminution of mortality, and that this diminution has been greater in the manufacturing towns than anywhere else. The mortality still is, as it always was, greater in towns than in the country. But the difference has diminished in an extraordinary degree. There is the best reason to believe, that the annual mortality of Manchester, about the middle of the last century, was one in twenty-eight. It is now reckoned at one in forty-five. In Glasgow and Leeds, a similar improvement has taken place. Nay, the rate of mortality in those three great capitals of the manufacturing districts is now considerably less than it was fifty years ago over England and Wales taken together, open country and all. We might with some plausibility maintain, that the people live longer because they are better fed, better lodged, better clothed, and better attended in sickness; and that these improvements are owing to that increase of national wealth which the manufacturing system has produced.

Much more might be said on this subject. But to what end? It is not from bills of mortality and statistical tables that Mr. Southey has learned his political creed. He cannot stoop to study the history of the system which he abuses, to strike the balance between the good and evil which it has produced, to compare district with district, or generation with generation. We will give his own reasons for his opinion, the only reason which he gives for it, in his own words:

"We remained awhile in silence, looking upon the assemblage of dwellings below. Here, and in the adjoining hamlet of Millbeck, the effects of manufactures and of agriculture may be seen and compared. The old cottages are such as the poet and the painter equally delight in beholding. Substantially built of the native stone, without mortar, dirtied with no white lime, and their long, low roofs covered with slate; if they had been raised by the magic of some indigenous Amphion's music, the materials could not have adjusted themselves more beautifully in accord with the surrounding scene; and time has still further harmonized them with weather-stains, lichens, and moss, short grasses, and short fern, and stone-plants of various kinds. The ornamented chimneys, round or square, less adorned than those which, like little turrets, crest the houses of the Portuguese peasantry, and yet not less happily suited to their place; the hedge of clipt box beneath the windows, the rose-bushes beside the door, the little patch of flower-ground, with its tall hollyhocks in front; the garden beside, the bee-hives, and the orchard with its bank of daffodils and snow-drops, the earliest and the profusest in these parts, indicate in the owners some portion of ease and leisure, some regard to neatness and comfort, some sense of natural and innocent and healthful enjoyment. The new cottages of the manufacturers are upon the manufacturing pattern—naked, and in a row.

"How is it, said I, that every thing which is connected with manufactures presents such features of unqualified deformity? From the largest of Mammon's temples down to the poorest hovel in which his helotry are stalled, these edifices have all one character. Time will not mellow them; nature will never clothe nor conceal them; and they will remain always as offensive to the eye as to the mind."

Here is wisdom. Here are the principles on which nations are to be governed. Rose-bushes and poor-rates, rather than steam-engines and independence. Mortality and cottages with weather-stains, rather than health and long life with edifices which time cannot mellow. We are told, that our age has invented atrocities beyond the imagination of our fathers; that society has been brought into a state, compared with which extermination would be a blessing; and all because the dwellings of cotton-spinners are naked and rectangular. Mr. Southey has found out a way, he tells us, in which the effects of manufactures and agriculture may be compared. And what is this way? To stand on a hill, to look at a cottage and a manufactory, and to see which is the prettier. Does Mr. Southey think that the body of the English peasantry live, or ever lived, in substantial and ornamented cottages, with box-hedges, flower-gardens, bee-hives, and orchards? If not, what is his parallel worth? We despise those *filosofastri*, who think that they serve the cause of science by depreciating literature and the fine arts. But if any thing could excuse their narrowness of mind, it would be such a book as this. It is not strange that when one enthusiast makes the picturesque the test of political good, another should feel inclined to proscribe altogether the pleasures of taste and imagination.

Thus it is that Mr. Southey reasons about matters with which he thinks himself perfectly conversant. We cannot, therefore, be surprised to find that he commits extraordinary blunders when he writes on points of which he acknowledges himself to be ignorant. He confesses that he is not versed in political economy, that he has neither liking nor aptitude for it; and he then proceeds to read the public a lecture concerning it, which fully bears out his confession.

"All wealth," says Sir Thomas More, "in former times was tangible. It consisted in land, money, or chattels, which were either of real or conventional value."

Montesinos, as Mr. Southey somewhat affectedly calls himself, answers:

"Jewels, for example, and pictures, as in Holland—where, indeed, at one time, tulip-bulbs answered the same purpose."

"That bubble," says Sir Thomas, "was one of those

contagious insanities to which communities are subject. All wealth was real, till the extent of commerce rendered a paper currency necessary; which differed from precious stones and pictures in this important point, that there was no limit to its production."

"We regard it," says Montesinos, "as the representative of real wealth; and, therefore, limited always to the amount of what it represents."

"Pursue that notion," answers the ghost, "and you will be in the dark presently. Your provincial bank-notes, which constitute almost wholly the circulating medium of certain districts, pass current to-day. To-morrow, tidings may come that the house which issued them has stopped payment, and what do they represent then? You will find them the shadow of a shade."

We scarcely know at which end to begin to disentangle this knot of absurdities. We might ask, why it should be a greater proof of insanity in men to set a high value on rare tulips than on rare stones, which are neither more useful nor more beautiful? We might ask, how it can be said that there is no limit to the production of paper-money, when a man is hanged if he issues any in the name of another, and is forced to cash what he issues in his own? But Mr. Southey's error lies deeper still. "All wealth," says he, "was tangible and real, till paper currency was introduced." Now, was there ever, since man emerged from a state of utter barbarism, an age in which there were no debts? Is not a debt, while the solvency of the debtor is undoubted, always reckoned as part of the wealth of the creditor? Yet is it tangible and real wealth? Does it cease to be wealth, because there is the security of a written acknowledgement for it? And what else is paper currency? Did Mr. Southey ever read a bank-note? If he did, he would see that it is a written acknowledgement of a debt, and a promise to pay that debt. The promise may be violated, the debt may remain unpaid, those to whom it was due may suffer: but this is a risk not confined to cases of paper currency; it is a risk inseparable from the relation of debtor and creditor. Every man who sells goods for any thing but ready money runs the risk of finding that what he considered as part of his wealth one day, is nothing at

all the next day. Mr. Southey refers to the picture-galleries of Holland. The pictures were undoubtedly real and tangible possessions. But surely it might happen, that a burgomaster might owe a picture-dealer a thousand guilders for a Teniers. What in this case corresponds to our paper money is not the picture, which is tangible, but the claim of the picture-dealer on his customer for the price of the picture, which is not tangible. Now, would not the picture-dealer consider this claim as part of his wealth? Would not a tradesman, who knew of it, give credit to the picture-dealer the more readily on account of it? The burgomaster might be ruined. If so, would not those consequences follow which, as Mr. Southey tells us, were never heard of till paper-money came into use? Yesterday this claim was worth a thousand guilders. To-day what is it? The shadow of a shade.

It is true, that the more readily claims of this sort are transferred from hand to hand, the more extensive will be the injury produced by a single failure. The laws of all nations sanction, in certain cases, the transfer of rights not yet reduced into possession. Mr. Southey would scarcely wish, we should think, that all endorsements of bills and notes should be declared invalid. Yet, even if this were done, the transfer of claims would imperceptibly take place to a very great extent. When the baker trusts the butcher, for example, he is in fact, though not in form, trusting the butcher's customers. A man who owes large bills to tradesmen, and fails to pay them, almost always produces distress through a very wide circle of people whom he never dealt with.

In short, what Mr. Southey takes for a difference in kind, is only a difference of form and degree. In every society men have claims on the property of others. In every society there is a possibility that some debtors may not be able to fulfil their obligations. In every society, therefore, there is wealth which is not tangible, and which may become the shadow of a shade.

Mr. Southey then proceeds to a dissertation on the national debt, which he considers in a new and most consolatory light, as a clear addition to the income of the country.

"You can understand," says Sir Thomas, "that it constitutes a great part of the national wealth."

"So large a part," answers Montesinos, "that the interest amounted, during the prosperous time of agriculture, to as much as the rental of all the land in Great Britain; and at present to the rental of all lands, all houses, and all other fixed property, put together."

The ghost and the laureate agree that it is very desirable that there should be so secure and advantageous a deposit for wealth as the funds afford. Sir Thomas then proceeds:

"Another and far more momentous benefit must not be overlooked: the expenditure of an annual interest, equalling, as you have stated, the present rental of all fixed property."

"That expenditure," quoth Montesinos, "gives employment to half the industry in the kingdom, and feeds half the mouths. Take, indeed, the weight of the national debt from this great and complicated social machine, and the wheels must stop."

From this passage, we should have been inclined to think that Mr. Southey supposes the dividends to be a free gift periodically sent down from heaven to the fundholders, as quails and manna were sent to the Israelites; were it not that he has vouchsafed, in the following question and answer, to give the public some information which, we believe, was very little needed.

"Whence comes the interest?" says Sir Thomas.

"It is raised," answers Montesinos, "by taxation."

Now, has Mr. Southey ever considered what would be done with this sum, if it were not paid as interest to the national creditor? If he would think over this matter for a short time, we suspect that the "momentous benefit" of which he talks would appear to him to shrink strangely in amount. A fundholder, we will suppose, spends an income of five hundred pounds a-year, and his ten nearest neighbours pay fifty pounds each to the tax-gatherer, for the purpose of discharging the interest of the national debt. If the debt were wiped out,—a measure, be it understood, which we by no means recommend,—the fundholder would cease to spend his five hundred pounds a-year. He would no longer give employment to industry, or put food into the mouths of

labourers. This Mr. Southey thinks a fearful evil. But is there no mitigating circumstance? Each of his ten neighbours has fifty pounds more than formerly. Each of them will, as it seems to our feeble understandings, employ more industry, and feed more mouths, than formerly. The sum is exactly the same. It is in different hands. But on what grounds does Mr. Southey call upon us to believe that it is in the hands of men who will spend less liberally or less judiciously? He seems to think, that nobody but a fundholder can employ the poor; that if a tax is remitted, those who formerly used to pay it proceed immediately to dig holes in the earth, and bury the sum which the government had been accustomed to take; that no money can set industry in motion till it has been taken by the tax-gatherer out of one man's pocket and put into another man's. We really wish that Mr. Southey would try to prove this principle, which is indeed the foundation of his whole theory of finance; for we think it right to hint to him, that our hard-hearted and unimaginative generation will expect some more satisfactory reason than the only one with which he has yet favoured it—a similitude touching evaporation and dew.

Both the theory and the illustration, indeed, are old friends of ours. In every season of distress which we can remember, Mr. Southey has been proclaiming that it is not from economy, but from increased taxation, that the country must expect relief; and he still, we find, places the undoubting faith of a political Diafoirus in his

"Resaignare, repurgare, et reclysterizare."

"A people," he tells us, "may be too rich, but a government cannot be so."

"A state," says he, "cannot have more wealth at its command than may be employed for the general good, a liberal expenditure in national works being one of the surest means for promoting national prosperity; and the benefit being still more obvious, of an expenditure directed to the purposes of national improvement. But a people may be too rich."

We fully admit that a state cannot have at its command more wealth than *may be* employed for the general good.

But neither can individuals, or bodies of individuals, have at their command more wealth than *may be* employed for the general good. If there be no limit to the sum which may be usefully laid out in public works and national improvement, then wealth, whether in the hands of private men or of the government, *may* always, if the possessor choose to spend it usefully, be usefully spent. The only ground, therefore, on which Mr. Southey can possibly maintain that a government cannot be too rich, but that a people may be too rich, must be this, that governments are more likely to spend their money on good objects than private individuals.

But what is useful expenditure? "A liberal expenditure in national works," says Mr. Southey, "is one of the surest means for promoting national prosperity." What does he mean by national prosperity? Does he mean the wealth of the state? If so, his reasoning runs thus:—The more wealth a state has the better; for the more wealth a state has the more wealth it will have. This is surely something like that fallacy, which is ungallantly termed a lady's reason. If by national prosperity he means the wealth of the people, of how gross a contradiction is he guilty. A people, he tells us, may be too rich; a government cannot; for a government can employ its riches in making the people richer. The wealth of the people is to be taken from them, because they have too much, and laid out in works which yield them more.

We are really at a loss to determine whether Mr. Southey's reasons for recommending large taxation is that it will make the people rich, or that it will make them poor. But we are sure that if his object is to make them rich, he takes the wrong course. There are two or three principles respecting public works, which, as an experience of vast extent proves, may be trusted in almost every case.

It scarcely ever happens, that any private man, or body of men, will invest property in a canal, a tunnel, or a bridge, but from an expectation that the outlay will be profitable to them. No work of this sort can be profitable to private speculators, unless the public be willing to pay for the use of it. The public will not pay of their own accord for what yields no profit or convenience to them. There is thus a direct and obvious connection between the motive which

induces individuals to undertake such a work, and the utility of the work.

Can we find any such connection in the case of a public work executed by a government? If it is useful, are the individuals who rule the country richer? If it is useless, are they poorer? A public man may be solicitous for his credit: but is not he likely to gain more credit by an useless display of ostentatious architecture in a great town, than by the best road or the best canal in some remote province? The fame of public works is a much less certain test of their utility, than the amount of toll collected at them. In a corrupt age there will be a direct embezzlement. In the purest age, there will be abundance of jobbing. Never were the statesmen of any country more sensitive to public opinion, and more spotless in pecuniary transactions, than those who have of late governed England. Yet we have only to look at the buildings recently erected in London for a proof of our rule. In a bad age, the fate of the public is to be robbed. In a good age, it is much milder—merely to have the dearest and the worst of every thing.

Buildings for state purposes the state must erect. And here we think that, in general, the state ought to stop. We firmly believe, that five hundred thousand pounds subscribed by individuals for railroads or canals would produce more advantage to the public, than five millions voted by Parliament for the same purpose. There are certain old saws about the master's eye, and about everybody's business, in which we place very great faith.

There is, we have said, no consistency in Mr. Southey's political system. But if there be in it any leading principle, if there be any one error which diverges more widely and variously than any other, it is that of which his theory about national works is a ramification. He conceives that the business of the magistrate is, not merely to see that the persons and property of the people are secure from attack, but that he ought to be a perfect jack of all trades, architect, engineer, schoolmaster, merchant, theologian, a Lady Bountiful in every parish, a Paul Pry in every house, spying, eavesdropping, relieving, admonishing, spending our money for us, and choosing our opinions for us. His principle is, if we understand it rightly, that no man can do any thing so

well for himself, as his rulers, be they who they may, can do it for him; that a government approaches nearer and nearer to perfection, in proportion as it interferes more and more with the habits and notions of individuals.

He seems to be fully convinced, that it is in the power of government to relieve the distresses under which the lower orders labour. Nay, he considers doubt on this subject as impious. We cannot refrain from quoting his argument on this subject. It is a perfect jewel of logic.

"Many thousands in your metropolis," says Sir Thomas More, "rise every morning without knowing how they are to subsist during the day; as many of them, where they are to lay their heads at night. All men, even the vicious themselves, know that wickedness leads to misery; but many, even among the good and the wise, have yet to learn that misery is almost as often the cause of wickedness."

"There are many," says Montesinos, "who know this, but believe that it is not in the power of human institutions to prevent this misery. They see the effect, but regard the causes as inseparable from the condition of human nature."

"As surely as God is good," replies Sir Thomas, "so surely there is no such thing as necessary evil. For, by the religious mind, sickness, and pain, and death are not to be accounted evils."

Now, if sickness, pain, and death are not evils, we cannot understand why it should be an evil that thousands should rise without knowing how they are to subsist. The only evil of hunger is, that it produces first pain, then sickness, and finally death. If it did not produce these, it would be no calamity. If these are not evils, it is no calamity. We cannot conceive why it should be a greater impeachment of the Divine goodness, that some men should not be able to find food to eat, than that others should have stomachs which derive no nourishment from food when they have eaten it. Whatever physical effects want produces may also be produced by disease. Whatever salutary effects disease may produce may also be produced by want. If poverty makes men thieves, disease and pain often sour the temper and contract the heart.

We will propose a very plain dilemma: Either physical pain is an evil, or it is not an evil. If it is an evil, then

there is necessary evil in the universe: if it is not, why should the poor be delivered from it?

Mr. Southey entertains as exaggerated a notion of the wisdom of governments as of their power. He speaks with the greatest disgust of the respect now paid to public opinion. That opinion is, according to him, to be distrusted and dreaded; its usurpation ought to be vigorously resisted; and the practice of yielding to it is likely to ruin the country. To maintain police is, according to him, only one of the ends of government. Its duties are patriarchal and paternal. It ought to consider the moral discipline of the people as its first object, to establish a religion, to train the whole community in that religion, and to consider all dissenters as its own enemies.

"Nothing," says Sir Thomas, "is more certain than that religion is the basis upon which civil government rests; that from religion power derives its authority, laws their efficacy, and both their zeal and sanction; and it is necessary that this religion be established for the security of the state and for the welfare of the people, who would otherwise be moved to and fro with every wind of doctrine. A state is secure in proportion as the people are attached to its institutions; it is, therefore, the first and plainest rule of sound policy, that the people be trained up in the way they should go. The state that neglects this prepares its own destruction; and they that train them in any other way are undermining it. Nothing in abstract science can be more certain than these positions are."

"All of which," answers Montesinos, "are nevertheless denied by our professors of the arts Babblative and Scribblative, some in the audacity of evil designs, and others in the glorious assurance of impenetrable ignorance."

The greater part of the two volumes before us is merely an amplification of these absurd paragraphs. What does Mr. Southey mean by saying that religion is demonstrably the basis of civil government? He cannot surely mean that men have no motives, except those derived from religion, for establishing and supporting civil government, that no temporal advantage is derived from civil government, that man would experience no temporal inconvenience from living in a state of anarchy? If he allows, as we think he

must allow, that it is for the good of mankind in this world to have civil government, and that the great majority of mankind have always thought it for their good in this world to have civil government, we then have a basis for government quite distinct from religion. It is true, that the Christian religion sanctions government, as it sanctions every thing which promotes the happiness and virtue of our species. But we are at a loss to conceive in what sense religion can be said to be the basis of government, in which it is not also the basis of the practices of eating, drinking, and lighting fires in cold weather. Nothing in history is more certain than that government has existed, has received some obedience and given some protection, in times in which it derived no support from religion, in times in which there was no religion that influenced the hearts and lives of men. It was not from dread of Tartarus, or belief in the Elysian fields, that an Athenian wished to have some institutions which might keep Orestes from filching his cloak, or Midias from breaking his head. "It is from religion," says Mr. Southey, "that power derives its authority, and laws their efficacy." From what religion does our power over the Hindoos derive its authority, or the law in virtue of which we hang Brahmins, its efficacy? For thousands of years civil government has existed in almost every corner of the world, in ages of priestcraft, in ages of fanaticism, in ages of epicurean indifference, in ages of enlightened piety. However pure or impure the faith of the people might be, whether they adored a beneficent or malignant power, whether they thought the soul mortal or immortal, they have, as soon as they ceased to be absolute savages, found out their need of civil government, and instituted it accordingly. It is as universal as the practice of cookery. Yet, it is as certain, says Mr. Southey, as any thing in abstract science, that government is founded on religion. We should like to know what notion Mr. Southey has of the demonstrations of abstract science: but a vague one, we suspect.

The proof proceeds. As religion is the basis of government, and as the state is secure in proportion as the people are attached to its institutions, it is, therefore, says Mr. Southey, the first rule of policy, that the government should train the people in the way in which they should go; and

it is plain, that those who train them in any other way, are undermining the state.

Now it does not appear to us to be the first object, that people should always believe in the established religion, and be attached to the established government. A religion may be false. A government may be oppressive. And whatever support government gives to false religions, or religion to oppressive governments, we consider as a clear evil.

The maxim, that governments ought to train the people in the way in which they should go, sounds well. But is there any reason for believing that a government is more likely to lead the people in the right way, than the people to fall into the right way of themselves? Have there not been governments which were blind leaders of the blind? Are there not still such governments? Can it be laid down as a general rule that the movement of political and religious truth is rather downwards from the government to the people, than upwards from the people to the government? These are questions which it is of importance to have clearly resolved. Mr. Southey declaims against public opinion, which is now, he tells us, usurping supreme power. Formerly, according to him, the laws governed; now public opinion governs. What are laws but expressions of the opinion of some class which has power over the rest of the community? By what was the world ever governed, but by the opinion of some person or persons? By what else can it ever be governed? What are all systems, religious, political, or scientific, but opinions resting on evidence more or less satisfactory? The question is not between human opinion and some higher and more certain mode of arriving at truth, but between opinion and opinion, between the opinion of one man and another, or of one class and another, or of one generation and another. Public opinion is not infallible; but can Mr. Southey construct any institutions which shall secure to us the guidance of an infallible opinion? Can Mr. Southey select any family, any profession, any class, in short, distinguished by any plain badge from the rest of the community, whose opinion is more likely to be just than this much abused public opinion? Would he choose the peers, for example? Or the two hundred tallest men in the country? Or the poor Knights of Windsor? Or children who are born with cauls,

seventh sons of seventh sons? We cannot suppose that he would recommend popular election; for that is merely an appeal to public opinion. And to say that society ought to be governed by the opinion of the wisest and best, though true, is useless. Whose opinion is to decide, who are the wisest and best?

Mr. Southey and many other respectable people seem to think that when they have once proved the moral and religious training of the people to be a most important object, it follows of course that it is an object which the government ought to pursue. They forget that we have to consider, not merely the goodness of the end, but also the fitness of the means. Neither in the natural nor in the political body have all members the same office. There is surely no contradiction in saying that a certain section of the community may be quite competent to protect the persons and property of the rest, yet quite unfit to direct our opinions or to superintend our private habits.

So strong is the interest of a ruler to protect his subjects against all depredations and outrages except his own, so clear and simple are the means by which this end is to be effected, that men are probably better off under the worst governments in the world, than they would be in a state of anarchy. Even when the appointment of magistrates has been left to chance, as in the Italian Republics, things have gone on better than they would have done if there had been no magistrates at all, and every man had done what seemed right in his own eyes. But we see no reason for thinking that the opinions of the magistrate are more likely to be right than those of any other man. None of the modes by which rulers are appointed, popular election, the accident of the lot, or the accident of birth, afford, as far as we can perceive, much security for their being wiser than any of their neighbours. The chance of their being wiser than all their neighbours together is still smaller. Now we cannot conceive how it can be laid down, that it is the duty and the right of one class to direct the opinions of another, unless it can be proved that the former class is more likely to form just opinions than the latter.

The duties of government would be, as Mr. Southey says that they are, paternal, if a government were necessarily as

much superior in wisdom to a people, as the most foolish father, for a time, is to the most intelligent child, and if a government loved a people as fathers generally love their children. But there is no reason to believe that a government will either have the paternal warmth of affection, or the paternal superiority of intellect. Mr. Southey might as well say, that the duties of the shoemaker are paternal, and that it is a usurpation in any man not of the craft to say that his shoes are bad, and to insist on having better. The division of labour would be no blessing, if those by whom a thing is done were to pay no attention to the opinion of those for whom it is done. The shoemaker, in the Relapse, tells Lord Foppington, that his lordship is mistaken in supposing that his shoe pinches. "It does not pinch, it cannot pinch; I know my business, and I never made a better shoe." This is the way in which Mr. Southey would have a government treat a people who usurp the privilege of thinking. Nay, the shoemaker of Vanbrugh has the advantage in the comparison. He contented himself with regulating his customer's shoes, about which he knew something, and did not presume to dictate about the coat and hat. But Mr. Southey would have the rulers of a country prescribe opinions to the people, not only about politics, but about matters concerning which a government has no peculiar sources of information, concerning which any man in the streets may know as much, and think as justly, as a king—religion and morals.

Men are never so likely to settle a question rightly, as when they discuss it freely. A government can interfere in discussion only by making it less free than it would otherwise be. Men are most likely to form just opinions, when they have no other wish than to know the truth, and are exempt from all influence, either of hope or fear. Government, as government, can bring nothing but the influence of hopes and fears to support its doctrines. It carries on controversy, not with reasons, but with threats and bribes. If it employs reasons, it does so not in virtue of any powers which belong to it as a government. Thus, instead of a contest between argument and argument, we have a contest between argument and force. Instead of a contest in which truth, from the natural constitution of the

human mind, has a decided advantage over falsehood, we have a contest in which truth can be victorious only by accident.

And what, after all, is the security which this training gives to governments? Mr. Southey would scarcely recommend, that discussion should be more effectually shackled, that public opinion should he more strictly disciplined into conformity with established institutions, than in Spain and Italy. Yet we know that the restraints which exist in Spain and Italy have not prevented atheism from spreading among the educated classes, and especially among those whose office it is to minister at the altars of God. All our readers know how, at the time of the French Revolution, priest after priest came forward to declare that his doctrine, his ministry, his whole life, had been a lie, a mummery during which he could scarcely compose his countenance sufficiently to carry on the imposture. This was the case of a false, or at least a grossly corrupted, religion. Let us take, then, the case of all others the most favourable to Mr. Southey's argument. Let us take that form of religion which he holds to be the purest, the system of the Arminian part of the Church of England. Let us take the form of government which he most admires and regrets, the government of England in the time of Charles the First. Would he wish to see a closer connection between church and state than then existed? Would he wish for more powerful ecclesiastical tribunals? for a more zealous king? for a more active primate? Would he wish to see a more complete monopoly of public instruction given to the Established Church? Could any government do more to train the people in the way in which he would have them go? And in what did all this training end? The Report of the state of the Province of Canterbury, delivered by Laud to his Master at the close of 1639, represents the Church of England as in the highest and most palmy state. So effectually had the government pursued that policy which Mr. Southey wishes to see revived, that there was scarcely the least appearance of dissent. Most of the bishops stated that all was well among their flocks. Seven or eight persons of the diocese of Peterborough had seemed refractory to the church, but had made ample submission. In Norfolk and Suffolk all whom there

had been reason to suspect, had made profession of conformity, and appeared to observe it strictly. It is confessed that there was a little difficulty in bringing some of the vulgar in Suffolk to take the sacrament at the rails in the chancel. This is the only open instance of non-conformity which the vigilant eye of Laud could find in all the dioceses of his twenty-one suffragans, on the very eve of a revolution, in which primate and church, and monarch and monarchy, were to perish together.

At which time would Mr. Southey pronounce the constitution more secure; in 1639, when Laud presented this report to Charles, or now, when thousands of meetings openly collect millions of dissenters, when designs against the tithes are openly avowed, when books attacking not only the Establishment, but the first principles of Christianity, are openly sold in the streets? The signs of discontent, he tells us, are stronger in England now, than in France when the States-General met; and hence he would have us infer that a revolution like that of France may be at hand. Does he not know that the danger of states is to be estimated, not by what breaks out of the public mind, but by what stays in it? Can he conceive any thing more terrible than the situation of a government which rules without apprehension over a people of hypocrites; which is flattered by the press and cursed in the inner chambers; which exults in the attachment and obedience of its subjects, and knows not that those subjects are leagued against it in a freemasonry of hatred, the sign of which is every day conveyed in the glance of ten thousand eyes, the pressure of ten thousand hands, and the tone of ten thousand voices? Profound and ingenious policy! Instead of curing the disease, to remove those symptoms by which alone its nature can be known! To leave the serpent his deadly sting, and deprive him only of his warning rattle!

When the people whom Charles had so assiduously trained in the good way had rewarded his paternal care by cutting off his head, a new kind of training came into fashion. Another government arose, which, like the former, considered religion as its surest basis, and the religious discipline of the people as its first duty. Sanguinary laws were enacted against libertinism; profane pictures were burned; drapery was put on indecorous statues; the theatres were shut up;

fast-days were numerous; and the Parliament resolved that no person should be admitted into any public employment, unless the House should be first satisfied of his vital godliness. We know what was the end of this training. We know that it ended in impiety, in filthy and heartless sensuality, in the dissolution of all ties of honour and morality. We know that at this very day scriptural phrases, scriptural names, perhaps some scriptural doctrines, excite disgust and ridicule, solely because they are associated with the austerity of that period.

Thus has the experiment of training the people in established forms of religion been twice tried in England on a large scale; once by Charles and Laud, and once by the Puritans. The High Tories of our time still entertain many of the feelings and opinions of Charles and Laud, though in a mitigated form; nor is it difficult to see that the heirs of the Puritans are still amongst us. It would be desirable that each of these parties should remember how little advantage or honour it formerly derived from the closest alliance with power; that it fell by the support of rulers, and rose by their opposition; that of the two systems, that in which the people were at any time being drilled was always at that time the unpopular system; that the training of the High Church ended in the reign of the Puritans, and the training of the Puritans in the reign of the harlots.

This was quite natural. Nothing is so galling and detestable to a people not broken in from the birth, as a paternal, or, in other words, a meddling government—a government which tells them what to read, and say, and eat, and drink, and wear. Our fathers could not bear it two hundred years ago; and we are not more patient than they. Mr. Southey thinks that the yoke of the church is dropping off, because it is loose. We feel convinced that it is borne only because it is easy, and that, in the instant in which an attempt is made to tighten it, it will be flung away. It will be neither the first nor the strongest yoke that has been broken asunder and trampled under foot in the day of the vengeance of England.

How far Mr. Southey would have the government carry its measures for training the people in the doctrines of the church, we are unable to discover. In one passage Sir Thomas More asks with great vehemence,

"Is it possible that your laws should suffer the unbelievers to exist as a party?

"Vetitum est adeo sceleris nihil?"

Montesinos answers. "They avow themselves in defiance of the laws. The fashionable doctrine which the press at this time maintains is, that this is a matter in which the laws ought not to interfere, every man having a right, both to form what opinion he pleases upon religious subjects, and to promulgate that opinion."

It is clear, therefore, that Mr. Southey would not give full and perfect toleration to infidelity. In another passage, however, he observes with some truth, though too sweepingly, that "any degree of intolerance, short of that full extent which the Papal church exercises where it has the power, acts upon the opinions which it is intended to suppress, like pruning upon vigorous plants, they grow the stronger for it." These two passages, put together, would lead us to the conclusion that, in Mr. Southey's opinion, the utmost severity ever employed by the Roman Catholic church in the days of its greatest power, ought to be employed against unbelievers in England; in plain words, that Carlile and his shopmen ought to be burned in Smithfield, and that every person who, when called upon, should decline to make a solemn profession of Christianity, ought to suffer the same fate. We do not, however, believe that Mr. Southey would recommend such a course, though his language would, in the case of any other writer, justify us in supposing this to be his meaning. His opinions form no system at all. He never sees, at one glance, more of a question than will furnish matter for one flowing and well-turned sentence; so that it would be the height of unfairness to charge him personally with holding a doctrine, merely because that doctrine is deducible, though by the closest and most accurate reasoning, from the premises which he has laid down. We are, therefore, left completely in the dark as to Mr. Southey's opinion about toleration. Immediately after censuring the government for not punishing infidels, he proceeds to discuss the question of the Catholic disabilities, now, thank God, removed, and defends them on the ground that the Catholic doctrines tend to

persecution, and that the Catholics persecuted when they had power.

"They must persecute," says he, "if they believe their own creed, for conscience' sake; and if they do not believe it, they must persecute for policy; because it is only by intolerance that so corrupt and injurious a system can be upheld."

That unbelievers should not be persecuted, is an instance of national depravity at which the glorified spirit stands aghast. Yet a sect of Christians is to be excluded from power, because those who formerly held the same opinions were guilty of persecution. We have said that we do not very well know what Mr. Southey's opinion about toleration is. But, on the whole, we take it to be this, that everybody is to tolerate him, and that he is to tolerate nobody.

We will not be deterred by any fear of misrepresentation from expressing our hearty approbation of the mild, wise, and eminently Christian manner, in which the church and the government have lately acted with respect to blasphemous publications. We praise them for not having thought it necessary to encircle a religion pure, merciful, and philosophical—a religion, to the evidences of which the highest intellects have yielded—with the defences of a false and bloody superstition. The ark of God was never taken till it was surrounded by the arms of earthly defenders. In captivity, its sanctity was sufficient to vindicate it from insult, and to lay the hostile fiend prostrate on the threshold of his own temple. The real security of Christianity is to be found in its benevolent morality, in its exquisite adaptation to the human heart, in the facility with which its scheme accommodates itself to the capacity of every human intellect, in the consolation which it bears to the house of mourning, in the light with which it brightens the great mystery of the grave. To such a system it can bring no addition of dignity or of strength, that it is part and parcel of the common law. It is not now for the first time left to rely on the force of its own evidences and the attractions of its own beauty. Its sublime theology confounded the Grecian schools in the fair conflict of reason with reason. The bravest and wisest of the Cæsars found their arms and their policy unavailing when opposed to the weapons that were not

carnal, and the kingdom that was not of this world. The victory which Porphyry and Diocletian failed to gain is not, to all appearance, reserved for any of those who have in this age directed their attacks against the last restraint of the powerful, and the last hope of the wretched. The whole history of the Christian religion shows that she is in far greater danger of being corrupted by the alliance of power, than of being crushed by its opposition. Those who thrust temporal sovereignty upon her, treat her as their prototypes treated her author. They bow the knee and spit upon her; they cry Hail! and smite her on the cheek; they put a sceptre into her hand, but it is a fragile reed; they crown her, but it is with thorns; they cover with purple the wounds which their own hands have inflicted on her; and inscribe magnificent titles over the cross on which they have fixed her to perish in ignominy and pain.

The general view which Mr. Southey takes of the prospects of society is very gloomy; but we comfort ourselves with the consideration that Mr. Southey is no prophet. He foretold, we remember, on the very eve of the abolition of the Test and Corporation Acts, that these hateful laws were immortal, and that pious minds would long be gratified by seeing the most solemn religious rite of the church profaned, for the purpose of upholding her political supremacy. In the book before us, he says that Catholics cannot possibly be admitted into Parliament until those whom Johnson called "the bottomless Whigs" come into power. While the book was in the press, the prophecy was falsified, and a Tory of the Tories, Mr. Southey's own favourite hero, won and wore that noblest wreath, "*Ob cives servatos.*"

The signs of the times, Mr. Southey tells us, are very threatening. His fears for the country would decidedly preponderate over his hopes, but for his firm reliance on the mercy of God. Now, as we know that God has once suffered the civilized world to be overrun by savages, and the Christian religion to be corrupted by doctrines which made it, for some ages, almost as bad as Paganism, we cannot think it inconsistent with his attributes that similar calamities should again befall mankind.

We look, however, on the state of the world, and of this kingdom in particular, with much greater satisfaction, and

with better hopes. Mr. Southey speaks with contempt of those who think the savage state happier than the social. On this subject, he says, Rousseau never imposed on him, even in his youth. But he conceives that a community which has advanced a little way in civilization is happier than one which has made greater progress. The Britons in the time of Cæsar were happier, he suspects, than the English of the nineteenth century. On the whole, he selects the generation which preceded the Reformation, as that in which the people of this country were better off than at any time before or since.

This opinion rests on nothing, as far as we can see, except his own individual associations. He is a man of letters; and a life destitute of literary pleasures seems insipid to him. He abhors the spirit of the present generation, the severity of its studies, the boldness of its inquiries, and the disdain with which it regards some old prejudices by which his own mind is held in bondage. He dislikes an utterly unenlightened age; he dislikes an investigating and reforming age. The first twenty years of the sixteenth century would have exactly suited him. They furnished just the quantity of intellectual excitement which he requires. The learned few read and wrote largely. A scholar was held in high estimation, but the rabble did not presume to think; and even the most inquiring and independent of the educated classes paid more reverence to authority and less to reason, than is usual in our time. This is a state of things in which Mr. Southey would have found himself quite comfortable; and, accordingly, he pronounces it the happiest state of things ever known in the world.

The savages were wretched, says Mr. Southey; but the people in the time of Sir Thomas More were happier than either they or we. Now, we think it quite certain that we have the advantage over the contemporaries of Sir Thomas More in every point in which they had any advantage over savages.

Mr. Southey does not even pretend to maintain that the people in the sixteenth century were better lodged or clothed than at present. He seems to admit that in these respects there has been some little improvement. It is indeed a matter about which scarcely any doubt can exist in the most

perverse mind, that the improvements of machinery have lowered the price of manufactured articles, and have brought within the reach of the poorest some conveniences which Sir Thomas More or his master could not have obtained at any price.

The labouring classes, however, were, according to Mr. Southey, better fed three hundred years ago than at present. We believe that he is completely in error on this point. The condition of servants in noble and wealthy families, and of scholars at the universities, must surely have been better in those times than that of common day-labourers; and we are sure that it was not better than that of our work-house paupers. From the household book of the Northumberland family, we find that in one of the greatest establishments of the kingdom the servants lived almost entirely on salt meat, without any bread at all. A more unwholesome diet can scarcely be conceived. In the reign of Edward the Sixth, the state of the students at Cambridge is described to us, on the very best authority, as most wretched. Many of them dined on pottage made of a farthing's worth of beef with a little salt and oatmeal, and literally nothing else. This account we have from a contemporary master of St. John's. Our parish poor now eat wheaten bread. In the sixteenth century the labourer was glad to get barley, and was often forced to content himself with poorer fare. In Harrison's introduction to Holinshed, we have an account of the state of our working population in the "golden days," as Mr. Southey calls them, of good Queen Bess. "The gentilitie," says he, "commonly provide themselves sufficiently of wheat for their own tables, whylest their household and poore neighbours in some shires are inforced to content themselves with rice or barley; yea, and in time of dearth, many with bread made eyther of beanes, peason, or otes, or of all together, and some acornes among. I will not say that this extremity is oft so well to be seen in time of plentie as of dearth; but if I should I could easily bring my trial; for albeit there be much more grounde eared nowe almost in everye place then hath beene of late yeares, yet such a price of corne continueth in each town and markete, without any just cause, that the artificer and poore labouring man is not able to reach unto it, but is driven to content himself with

horse-corne; I mean beanes, peason, otes, tares, and lintelles." We should like to see what the effect would be, of putting any parish in England now on allowance of "horse-corne." The helotry of Mammon are not, in our day, so easily enforced to content themselves as the peasantry of that happy period, as Mr. Southey considers it, which elapsed between the fall of the feudal and the rise of commercial tyranny.

"The people," says Mr. Southey, "are worse fed than when they were fishers." And yet in another place he complains that they will not eat fish. "They have contracted," says he, "I know not how, some obstinate prejudice against a kind of food at once wholesome and delicate, and everywhere to be obtained cheaply and in abundance, were the demand for it as general as it ought to be." It is true that the lower orders have an obstinate prejudice against fish; but hunger has no such obstinate prejudices. If what was formerly a common diet is now eaten only in times of severe pressure, the inference is plain. The people must be fed with what they at least think better food than that of their ancestors.

The advice and medicine which the poorest labourer can now obtain, in disease or after an accident, is far superior to what Henry the Eighth could have commanded. Scarcely any part of the country is out of the reach of practitioners, who are probably not so far inferior to Sir Henry Halford as they are superior to Sir Anthony Denny. That there has been a great improvement in this respect Mr. Southey allows. Indeed, he could not well have denied it. "But," says he, "the evils for which the sciences are the palliative have increased since the time of the Druids in a proportion that heavily outweighs the benefit of improved therapeutics." We know nothing either of the diseases or the remedies of the Druids; but we are quite sure that the improvement of medicine has far more than kept pace with the increase of disease during the last three centuries. This is proved by the best possible evidence. The term of human life is decidedly longer in England than in any former age, respecting which we possess any information on which we can rely. All the rants in the world about picturesque cottages and temples of Mammon will not shake this argument.

No test of the state of society can be named so decisive as that which is furnished by bills of mortality. That the lives of the people of this country have been gradually lengthening during the course of several generations is as certain as any fact in statistics, and that the lives of men should become longer and longer, while the physical condition during life is becoming worse and worse, is utterly incredible.

Let our readers think over these circumstances. Let them take into the account the sweating sickness and the plague. Let them take into the account that fearful disease which first made its appearance in the generation to which Mr. Southey assigns the palm of felicity, and raged through Europe with a fury at which the physician stood aghast, and before which the people were swept away by thousands. Let them consider the state of the northern counties, constantly the scene of robberies, rapes, massacres, and conflagrations. Let them add to all this the fact that seventy-two thousand persons suffered death by the hands of the executioner during the reign of Henry the Eighth, and judge between the nineteenth and the sixteenth century.

We do not say that the lower orders in England do not suffer severe hardships. But in spite of Mr. Southey's assertions, and in spite of the assertions of a class of politicians, who, differing from Mr. Southey in every other point, agree with him in this, we are inclined to doubt whether they really suffer greater physical distress than the labouring classes of the most flourishing countries of the Continent.

It will scarcely be maintained that the lazzaroni who sleep under the porticos of Naples, or the beggars who besiege the convents of Spain, are in a happier situation than the English commonalty. The distress which has lately been experienced in the northern part of Germany, one of the best governed and most prosperous districts of Europe, surpasses, if we have been correctly informed, any thing which has of late years been known among us. In Norway and Sweden the peasantry are constantly compelled to mix bark with their bread, and even this expedient has not always preserved whole families and neighbourhoods from perishing together of famine. An experiment has lately been tried in the kingdom of the Netherlands, which has been cited to

prove the possibility of establishing agricultural colonies on the waste lands of England; but which proves to our minds nothing so clearly as this, that the rate of subsistence to which the labouring classes are reduced in the Netherlands is miserably low, and very far inferior to that of the English paupers. No distress which the people here have endured for centuries approaches to that which has been felt by the French in our own time. The beginning of the year 1817 was a time of great distress in this island. But the state of the lowest classes here was luxury compared with that of the people of France. We find, in Magendie's *Journal de Physiologie Expérimentale*, a paper on a point of physiology connected with the distress of that season. It appears that the inhabitants of six departments, Aix, Jura, Doubs, Haute Saone, Vosges, and Saone et Loire, were reduced first to oatmeal and potatoes, and at last to nettles, bean-stalks, and other kind of herbage fit only for cattle; that when the next harvest enabled them to eat barley-bread, many of them died from intemperate indulgence in what they thought an exquisite repast; and that a dropsy of a peculiar description was produced by the hard fare of the year. Dead bodies were found on the roads and in the fields. A single surgeon dissected six of these, and found the stomach shrunk, and filled with the unwholesome aliments which hunger had driven men to share with beasts. Such extremity of distress as this is never heard of in England, or even in Ireland. We are, on the whole, inclined to think, though we would speak with diffidence on a point on which it would be rash to pronounce a positive judgment without a much longer and closer investigation than we have bestowed upon it, that the labouring classes of this island, though they have their grievances and distresses, some produced by their own improvidence, some by the errors of their rulers, are on the whole better off as to physical comforts than the inhabitants of any equally extensive district of the old world. On this very account, suffering is more acutely felt and more loudly bewailed here than elsewhere. We must take into the account the liberty of discussion, and the strong interest which the opponents of a ministry always have to exaggerate the extent of the public disasters.

There are many parts of Europe in which the people quietly endure distress that here would shake the foundations of the state; in which the inhabitants of a whole province turn out to eat grass, with less clamour than one Spitalfields weaver would make here, if the overseers were to put him on barley-bread. In those new countries in which a civilized population has at its command a boundless extent of the richest soil, the condition of the labourer is probably happier than in any society which has lasted for many centuries. But in the old world we must confess ourselves unable to find any satisfactory record of any great nation, past or present, in which the working classes have been in a more comfortable situation than in England during the last thirty years. When this island was thinly peopled, it was barbarous. There was little capital; and that little was insecure. It is now the richest and the most highly civilized spot in the world; but the population is dense. Thus we have never known that golden age which the lower orders in the United States are now enjoying. We have never known an age of liberty, of order, and of education, an age in which the mechanical sciences were carried to a great height, yet in which the people were not sufficiently numerous to cultivate even the most fertile valleys. But, when we compare our own condition with that of our ancestors, we think it clear that the advantages arising from the progress of civilization have far more than counterbalanced the disadvantages arising from the progress of population. While our numbers have increased tenfold, our wealth has increased a hundredfold. Though there are so many more people to share the wealth now existing in the country than there were in the sixteenth century, it seems certain, that a greater share falls to almost every individual than fell to the share of any of the corresponding class in the sixteenth century. The king keeps a more splendid court. The establishments of the nobles are more magnificent. The esquires are richer, the merchants are richer, the shopkeepers are richer. The serving-man, the artisan, and the husbandman have a more copious and palatable supply of food, better clothing, and better furniture. This is no reason for tolerating abuses, or for neglecting any means of ameliorating the condition of our poorer country-

men. But it is a reason against telling them, as some of our philosophers are constantly telling them, that they are the most wretched people who ever existed on the face of the earth.

We have already adverted to Mr. Southey's amusing doctrine about national wealth. A state, says he, cannot be too rich; but a people may be too rich. His reason for thinking this, is extremely curious.

"A people may be too rich, because it is the tendency of the commercial, and more especially, of the manufacturing system, to collect wealth rather than to diffuse it. Where wealth is necessarily employed in any of the speculations of trade, its increase is in proportion to its amount. Great capitalists become like pikes in a fish-pond, who devour the weaker fish; and it is but too certain, that the poverty of one part of the people seems to increase in the same ratio as the riches of another. There are examples of this in history. In Portugal, when the high tide of wealth flowed in from the conquests in Africa and the East, the effect of that great influx was not more visible in the augmented splendour of the court, and the luxury of the higher ranks, than in the distress of the people."

Mr. Southey's instance is not a very fortunate one. The wealth which did so little for the Portuguese was not the fruit either of manufactures or of commerce carried on by private individuals. It was the wealth, not of the people, but of the government and its creatures, of those who, as Mr. Southey thinks, never can be too rich. The fact is, that Mr. Southey's proposition is opposed to all history, and to the phenomena which surround us on every side. England is the richest country in Europe, the most commercial, and the most manufacturing. Russia and Poland are the poorest countries in Europe. They have scarcely any trade, and none but the rudest manufactures. Is wealth more diffused in Russia and Poland than in England? There are individuals in Russia and Poland whose incomes are probably equal to those of our richest countrymen. It may be doubted, whether there are not, in those countries, as many fortunes of eighty thousand a-year as here. But are there as many fortunes of five thousand a-year, or of one thousand a-year? There are parishes in England which contain more people

of between five hundred and three thousand pounds a year than could be found in all the dominions of the Emperor Nicholas. The neat and commodious houses which have been built in London and its vicinity, for people of this class, within the last thirty years, would of themselves form a city larger than the capitals of some European kingdoms. And this is the state of society in which the great proprietors have devoured the smaller!

The cure that Mr. Southey thinks that he has discovered is worthy of the sagacity which he has shown in detecting the evil. The calamities arising from the collection of wealth in the hands of a few capitalists are to be remedied by collecting it in the hands of one great capitalist, who has no conceivable motive to use it better than other capitalists, —the all-devouring state.

It is not strange that, differing so widely from Mr. Southey as to the past progress of society, we should differ from him also as to its probable destiny. He thinks, that to all outward appearance, the country is hastening to destruction; but he relies firmly on the goodness of God. We do not see either the piety or the rationality of thus confidently expecting that the Supreme Being will interfere to disturb the common succession of causes and effects. We, too, rely on his goodness—on his goodness as manifested, not in extraordinary interpositions, but in those general laws which it has pleased him to establish in the physical and in the moral world. We rely on the natural tendency of the human intellect to truth, and on the natural tendency of society to improvement. We know no well authenticated instance of a people which has decidedly retrograded in civilization and prosperity, except from the influence of violent and terrible calamities—such as those which laid the Roman empire in ruins, or those which, about the beginning of the sixteenth century, desolated Italy. We know of no country which, at the end of fifty years of peace and tolerably good government, has been less prosperous than at the beginning of that period. The political importance of a state may decline, as the balance of power is disturbed by the introduction of new forces. Thus the influence of Holland and of Spain is much diminished. But are Holland and Spain poorer than formerly? We doubt it. Other countries have

outrun them. But we suspect that they had been positively, though not relatively, advancing. We suspect that Holland is richer than when she sent her navies up the Thames; that Spain is richer than when a French king was brought captive to the footstool of Charles the Fifth.

History is full of the signs of this natural progress of society. We see in almost every part of the annals of mankind how the industry of individuals, struggling up against wars, taxes, famines, conflagrations, mischievous prohibitions, and more mischievous protections, creates faster than governments can squander, and repairs whatever invaders can destroy. We see the capital of nations increasing, and all the arts of life approaching nearer and nearer to perfection, in spite of the grossest corruption and the wildest profusion on the part of rulers.

The present moment is one of great distress. But how small will that distress appear when we think over the history of the last forty years;—a war, compared with which all other wars sink into insignificance; taxation, such as the most heavily taxed people of former times could not have conceived; a debt larger than all the public debts that ever existed in the world added together; the food of the people studiously rendered dear; the currency imprudently debased, and imprudently restored. Yet is the country poorer than in 1790? We fully believe that, in spite of all the misgovernment of her rulers, she has been almost constantly becoming richer and richer. Now and then there has been a stoppage, now and then a short retrogression; but as to the general tendency, there can be no doubt. A single breaker may recede, but the tide is evidently coming in.

If we were to prophesy that, in the year 1930, a population of fifty millions, better fed, clad, and lodged than the English of our time, will cover these islands; that Sussex and Huntingdonshire will be wealthier than the wealthiest parts of the West-Riding of Yorkshire now are; that cultivation, rich as that of a flower-garden, will be carried up to the very tops of Ben Nevis and Helvellyn; that machines, constructed on principles yet undiscovered, will be in every house; that there will be no highways but railroads, no travelling but by steam; and our debt, vast as it seems to us, will appear to our great-grandchildren a trifling encum-

brance, which might easily be paid off in a year or two, many people would think us insane. We prophesy nothing; but this we say—If any person had told the Parliament which met in perplexity and terror after the crash in 1720, that in 1830 the wealth of England would surpass all their wildest dreams; that the annual revenue would equal the principal of that debt which they considered as an intolerable burden; that for one man of 10,000*l.* then living, there would be five men of 50,000*l.*; that London would be twice as large and twice as populous, and that nevertheless the mortality would have diminished to one-half what it then was, that the post-office would bring more into the exchequer than the excise and customs had brought in together under Charles II.; that stage-coaches would run from London to York in twenty-four hours; that men would sail without wind, and would be beginning to ride without horses, our ancestors would have given as much credit to the prediction as they gave to Gulliver's Travels. Yet the prediction would have been true; and they would have perceived that it was not altogether absurd if they had considered that the country was then raising every year a sum which would have purchased the fee-simple of the revenue of the Plantagenets, ten times what supported the government of Elizabeth, three times what, in the time of Oliver Cromwell, had been thought intolerably oppressive. To almost all men the state of things under which they have been used to live seems to be the necessary state of things. We have heard it said that five per cent. is the natural interest of money, that twelve is the natural number of a jury, that forty shillings is the natural qualification of a county voter. Hence it is that, though in every age everybody knows that up to his own time progressive improvement has been taking place, nobody seems to reckon on any improvement during the next generation. We cannot absolutely prove that those are in error, who tell us that society has reached a turning point, that we have seen our best days. But so said all who came before us, and with just as much apparent reason. "A million a year will beggar us," said the patriots of 1640. "Two millions a-year will grind the country to powder," was the cry in 1660. "Six millions a-year, and a debt of fifty millions!" exclaimed Swift; "the high allies have been the

ruin of us." "A hundred and forty millions of debt!" said Junius; "well may we say that we owe Lord Chatham more than we shall ever pay, if we owe him such a load as this." "Two hundred and forty millions of debt!" cried all the statesmen of 1783 in chorus; "what abilities, or what economy on the part of a minister, can save a country so burdened?" We know that if, since 1783, no fresh debt had been incurred, the increased resources of the country would have enabled us to defray that burden at which Pitt, Fox, and Burke stood aghast—to defray it over and over again, and that with much lighter taxation than what we have actually borne. On what principle is it, that, when we see nothing but improvement behind us, we are to expect nothing but deterioration before us?

It is not by the intermeddling of Mr. Southey's idol, the omniscient and omnipotent State, but by the prudence and energy of the people, that England has hitherto been carried forward in civilization; and it is to the same prudence and the same energy that we now look with comfort and good hope. Our rulers will best promote the improvement of the people by strictly confining themselves to their own legitimate duties; by leaving capital to find its most lucrative course, commodities their fair price, industry and intelligence their natural reward, idleness and folly their natural punishment; by maintaining peace, by defending property, by diminishing the price of law, and by observing strict economy in every department of the state. Let the government do this—the people will assuredly do the rest.

Moore's Life of Lord Byron.*

[*Edinburgh Review.*]

We have read this book with the greatest pleasure. Considered merely as a composition, it deserves to be classed among the best specimens of English prose which our age has produced. It contains, indeed, no single passage equal to two or three which we could select from the Life of Sheridan; but, as a whole, it it immeasurably superior to that work. The style is agreeable, clear, and manly; and when it rises into eloquence, rises without effort or ostentation. Nor is the matter inferior to the manner.

It would be difficult to name a book which exhibits more kindness, fairness, and modesty. It has evidently been written, not for the purpose of showing, what, however, it often shows, how well its author can write; but for the purpose of vindicating, as far as truth will permit, the memory of a celebrated man, who can no longer vindicate himself. Mr. Moore never thrusts himself between Lord Byron and the public. With the strongest temptations to egotism, he has said no more about himself than the subject absolutely required. A great part, indeed the greater part, of these volumes consists of extracts from the Letters and Journals of Lord Byron; and it is difficult to speak too highly of the skill which has been shown in the selection and arrangement. We will not say that we have not occasionally remarked in these two large quartos an anecdote which should have been omitted, a letter which should have been suppressed, a name which should have been concealed by

* *Letters and Journals of Lord Byron; with Notices of his Life.* By Thomas Moore, Esq. 2 vols. 4to. London, 1830.

asterisks; or asterisks which do not answer the purpose of concealing the name. But it is impossible, on a general survey, to deny that the task has been executed with great judgment and great humanity. When we consider the life which Lord Byron had led, his petulance, his irritability, and his communicativeness, we cannot but admire the dexterity with which Mr. Moore has contrived to exhibit so much of the character and opinions of his friend, with so little pain to the feelings of the living.

The extracts from the journals and correspondence of Lord Byron are in the highest degree valuable—not merely on account of the information which they contain respecting the distinguished man by whom they were written, but on account, also, of their rare merit as compositions. The Letters, at least those which were sent from Italy, are among the best in our language. They are less affected than those of Pope and Walpole; they have more matter in them than those of Cowper. Knowing that many of them were not written merely for the person to whom they were directed, but were general epistles, meant to be read by a large circle, we expected to find them clever and spirited, but deficient in ease. We looked with vigilance for instances of stiffness in the language, and awkwardness in the transitions. We have been agreeably disappointed; and we must confess, that if the epistolary style of Lord Byron was artificial, it was a rare and admirable instance of that highest art which cannot be distinguished from nature.

Of the deep and painful interest which this book excites, no abstract can give a just notion. So sad and dark a story is scarcely to be found in any work of fiction; and we are little disposed to envy the moralist who can read it without being softened.

The pretty fable by which the Duchess of Orleans illustrates the character of her son the regent might, with little change, be applied to Byron. All the fairies, save one, had been bidden to his cradle. All the gossips had been profuse of their gifts. One had bestowed nobility, another genius, a third beauty. The malignant elf who had been uninvited came last, and, unable to reverse what her sisters had done for their favourite, had mixed up a curse with every blessing. In the rank of Lord Byron, in his understanding,

in his character, in his very person, there was a strange union of opposite extremes. He was born to all that men covet and admire. But in every one of those eminent advantages which he possessed over others, there was mingled something of misery and debasement. He was sprung from a house, ancient indeed and noble, but degraded and impoverished by a series of crimes and follies, which had attained a scandalous publicity. The kinsman whom he succeeded had died poor, and, but for merciful judges, would have died upon the gallows. The young peer had great intellectual powers; yet there was an unsound part in his mind. He had naturally a generous and tender heart; but his temper was wayward and irritable. He had a head which statuaries loved to copy, and a foot the deformity of which the beggars in the streets mimicked. Distinguished at once by the strength and by the weakness of his intellect, affectionate yet perverse, a poor lord, and a handsome cripple, he required, if ever man required, the firmest and the most judicious training. But, capriciously as nature had dealt with him, the relative to whom the office of forming his character was intrusted was more capricious still. She passed from paroxysms of rage to paroxysms of fondness. At one time she stifled him with her caresses, at another time she insulted his deformity. He came into the world, and the world treated him as his mother treated him—sometimes with kindness, sometimes with severity, never with justice. It indulged him without discrimination, and punished him without discrimination. He was truly a spoiled child; not merely the spoiled child of his parents, but the spoiled child of nature, the spoiled child of fortune, the spoiled child of fame, the spoiled child of society. His first poems were received with a contempt which, feeble as they were, they did not absolutely deserve. The poem which he published on his return from his travels was, on the other hand, extolled far above its merits. At twenty-four, he found himself on the highest pinnacle of literary fame, with Scott, Wordsworth, Southey, and a crowd of other distinguished writers, beneath his feet. There is scarcely an instance in history of so sudden a rise to so dizzy an eminence.

Every thing that could stimulate and every thing that could gratify the strongest propensities of our nature—the gaze of

a hundred drawing-rooms, the acclamations of the whole nation, the applause of applauded men, the love of the loveliest of women—all this world, and all the glory of it, were at once offered to a young man, to whom nature had given violent passions, and whom education had never taught to control them. He lived as many men live who have no similar excuses to plead for their faults. But his countrymen and his countrywomen would love him and admire him. They were resolved to see in his excesses only the flash and outbreak of that same fiery mind which glowed in his poetry. He attacked religion; yet in religious circles his name was mentioned with fondness, and in many religious publications his works were censured with singular tenderness. He lampooned the Prince Regent; yet he could not alienate the Tories. Every thing, it seemed, was to be forgiven to youth, rank, and genius.

Then came the reaction. Society, capricious in its indignation as it had been capricious in its fondness, flew into a rage with its froward and petted darling. He had been worshipped with an irrational idolatry. He was persecuted with an irrational fury. Much has been written about those unhappy domestic occurrences which decided the fate of his life. Yet nothing ever was positively known to the public, but this—that he quarrelled with his lady, and that she refused to live with him. There have been hints in abundance, and shrugs and shakings of the head, and "Well, well, we know," and "We could an if we would," and "If we list to speak," and "There be that might an they list." But we are not aware that there is before the world, substantiated by credible, or even by tangible evidence, a single fact indicating that Lord Byron was more to blame than any other man who is on bad terms with his wife. The professional men whom Lady Byron consulted were undoubtedly of opinion that she ought not to live with her husband. But it is to be remembered that they formed that opinion without hearing both sides. We do not say, we do not mean to insinuate that Lady Byron was in any respect to blame. We think that those who condemn her on the evidence which is now before the public are as rash as those who condemn her husband. We will not pronounce any judgment; we cannot, even in our

own minds, form any judgment on a transaction which is so imperfectly known to us. It would have been well if, at the time of the separation, all those who knew as little about the matter then as we know about it now, had shown that forbearance, which, under such circumstances, is but common justice.

We know no spectacle so ridiculous as the British public in one of its periodical fits of morality. In general, elopements, divorces, and family quarrels pass with little notice. We read the scandal, talk about it for a day, and forget it. But once in six or seven years, our virtue becomes outrageous. We cannot suffer the laws of religion and decency to be violated. We must make a stand against vice. We must teach libertines that the English people appreciate the importance of domestic ties. Accordingly, some unfortunate man, in no respect more depraved than hundreds whose offences have been treated with lenity, is singled out as an expiatory sacrifice. If he has children, they are to be taken from him. If he has a profession, he is to be driven from it. He is, cut by the higher orders, and hissed by the lower. He is in truth, a sort of whipping-boy, by whose vicarious agonies all the other transgressors of the same class are, it is supposed, sufficiently chastised. We reflect very complacently on our own severity, and compare with great pride the high standard of morals established in England with the Parisian laxity. At length our anger is satiated. Our victim is ruined and heart-broken, and our virtue goes quietly to sleep for seven years more.

It is clear that those vices which destroy domestic happiness ought to be as much as possible repressed. It is equally clear that they cannot be repressed by penal legislation. It is therefore right and desirable that public opinion should be directed against them. But it should be directed against them uniformly, steadily, and temperately, not by sudden fits and starts. There should be one weight and one measure. Decimation is always an objectionable mode of punishment. It is the resource of judges too indolent and hasty to investigate facts and to discriminate nicely between shades of guilt. It is an irrational practice, even when adopted by military tribunals. When adopted by the tri-

bunal of public opinion, it is infinitely more irrational. It is good that a certain portion of disgrace should constantly attend on certain bad actions; but it is not good that the offenders merely have to stand the risk of a lottery of infamy; that ninety-nine out of every hundred should escape, and that the hundredth, perhaps the most innocent of the hundred, should pay for all. We remember to have seen a mob assembled in Lincoln's Inn to hoot a gentleman, against whom the most oppressive proceeding known to the English law was then in progress. He was hooted because he had been an indifferent and unfaithful husband, as if some of the most popular men of the age, Lord Nelson, for example, had not been indifferent and unfaithful husbands. We remember a still stronger case. Will posterity believe, that in an age in which men, whose gallantries were universally known, and had been legally proved, filled some of the highest offices in the state and in the army, presided at the meetings of religious and benevolent institutions, were the delight of every society and the favourites of the multitude, a crowd of moralists went to the theatre, in order to pelt a poor actor for disturbing the conjugal felicity of an alderman? What there was in the circumstances, either of the offender, or of the sufferer, to vindicate the zeal of the audience, we could never conceive. It has never been supposed that the situation of an actor is peculiarly favourable to the rigid virtues, or that an alderman enjoys any special immunity from injuries such as that which on this occasion roused the anger of the public. But such is the justice of mankind.

In these cases, the punishment was excessive; but the offence was known and proved. The case of Lord Byron was harder. True Jedwood justice was dealt out to him. First came the execution, then the investigation, and last of all, or rather not at all, the accusation. The public, without knowing any thing whatever about the transactions in his family, flew into a violent passion with him, and proceeded to invent stories which might justify its anger. Ten or twenty different accounts of the separation, inconsistent with each other, with themselves, and with common sense, circulated at the same time. What evidence there might be for any one of these, the virtuous people who

repeated them neither knew nor cared. For in fact these stories were not the causes, but the effects of the public indignation. They resembled those loathsome slanders which Goldsmith, and other abject libellers of the same class, were in the habit of publishing about Bonaparte—how he poisoned a girl with arsenic, when he was at the military school—how he hired a grenadier to shoot Dessaix at Marengo—how he filled St. Cloud with all the pollutions of Capreæ. There was a time when anecdotes like these obtained some credence from persons, who, hating the French Emperor, without knowing why, were eager to believe any thing which might justify their hatred. Lord Byron fared in the same way. His countrymen were in a bad humour with him. His writings and his character had lost the charm of novelty. He had been guilty of the offence which, of all offences, is punished more severely; he had been over-praised; he had excited too warm an interest; and the public, with its usual justice, chastized him for its own folly. The attachments of the multitude bear no small resemblance to those of the wanton enchantress in the Arabian Tales, who, when the forty days of her fondness were over, was not content with dismissing her lovers, but condemned them to expiate, in loathsome shapes, and under severe punishments, the crime of having once pleased her too well.

The obloquy which Byron had to endure was such as might well have shaken a more constant mind. The newspapers were filled with lampoons. The theatres shook with execrations. He was excluded from circles where he had lately been the observed of all observers. All those creeping things, that riot in the decay of nobler natures, hastened to their repast; and they were right; they did after their kind. It is not every day that the savage envy of aspiring dunces is gratified by the agonies of such a spirit, and the degradation of such a name.

The unhappy man left his country for ever. The howl of contumely followed him across the sea, up the Rhine, over the Alps; it gradually waxed fainter; it died away. Those who had raised it, began to ask each other, what, after all, was the matter about which they had been so clamorous; and wished to invite back the criminal whom they had

just chased from them. His poetry became more popular than it ever had been; and his complaints were read with tears by thousands and tens of thousands who had never seen his face.

He had fixed his home on the shores of the Adriatic, in the most picturesque and interesting of cities, beneath the brightest of skies, and by the brightest of seas. Censoriousness was not the vice of the neighbours whom he had chosen. They were a race corrupted by a bad government and a bad religion; long renowned for skill in the arts of voluptuousness, and tolerant of all the caprices of sensuality. From the public opinion of the country of his adoption he had nothing to dread. With the public opinion of the country of his birth he was at open war. He plunged into wild and desperate excesses, ennobled by no generous or tender sentiment. From his Venetian harem, he sent forth volume after volume, full of eloquence, of wit, of pathos, of ribaldry, and of bitter disdain. His health sank under the effects of his intemperance. His hair turned gray. His food ceased to nourish him. A hectic fever withered him up. It seemed that his body and mind were about to perish together.

From this wretched degradation he was in some measure rescued by an attachment, culpable indeed, yet such as, judged by the standard of morality established in the country where he lived, might be called virtuous. But an imagination polluted by vice, a temper imbittered by misfortune, and a frame habituated to the fatal excitement of intoxication, prevented him from fully enjoying the happiness which he might have derived from the purest and most tranquil of his many attachments. Midnight draughts of ardent spirits and Rhenish wines had begun to work the ruin of his fine intellect. His verse lost much of the energy and condensation which had distinguished it. But he would not resign, without a struggle, the empire which he had exercised over the men of his generation. A new dream of ambition arose before him, to be the centre of a literary party; the great mover of an intellectual revolution; to guide the public mind of England from his Italian retreat, as Voltaire had guided the public mind of France from the villa of Ferney. With this hope, as it should seem, he established *The Liberal.*

But, powerfully as he had affected the imaginations of his contemporaries, he mistook his own powers, if he hoped to direct their opinions: and he still more grossly mistook his own disposition, if he thought that he could long act in concert with other men of letters. The plan failed, and failed ignominiously. Angry with himself, angry with his coadjutors, he relinquished it; and turned to another project, the last and the noblest of his life.

A nation, once the first among the nations, pre-eminent in knowledge, pre-eminent in military glory, the cradle of philosophy, of eloquence, and of the fine arts, had been for ages bowed down under a cruel yoke. All the vices which tyranny generates—the abject vices which it generates in those who submit to it, the ferocious vices which it generates in those who struggle against it—had deformed the character of that miserable race. The valour which had won the great battle of human civilization, which had saved Europe, and subjugated Asia, lingered only among pirates and robbers. The ingenuity, once so conspicuously displayed in every department of physical and moral science, had been depraved into a timid and servile cunning. On a sudden, this degraded people had risen on their oppressors. Discountenanced or betrayed by the surrounding potentates, they had found in themselves something of that which might well supply the place of all foreign assistance—something of the energy of their fathers.

As a man of letters, Lord Byron could not but be interested in the event of this contest. His political opinions, though, like all his opinions, unsettled, leaned strongly towards the side of liberty. He had assisted the Italian insurgents with his purse; and if their struggle against the Austrian government had been prolonged, would probably have assisted them with his sword. But to Greece he was attached by peculiar ties. He had, when young, resided in that country. Much of his most splendid and popular poetry had been inspired by its scenery and by its history. Sick of inaction, degraded in his own eyes by his private vices and by his literary failures, pining for untried excitement and honourable distinction, he carried his exhausted body and his wounded spirit to the Grecian camp.

His conduct in his new situation showed so much vigour

and good sense as to justify us in believeing, that, if his life had been prolonged, he might have distinguished himself as a soldier and a politician. But pleasure and sorrow had done the work of seventy years upon his delicate frame. The hand of death was on him; he knew it; and the only wish which he uttered was that he might die sword in hand.

This was denied to him. Anxiety, exertion, exposure, and those fatal stimulants which had become indispensable to him, soon stretched him on a sick-bed, in a strange land, amidst strange faces, without one human being that he loved near him. There, at thirty-six, the most celebrated Englishman of the nineteenth century closed his brilliant and miserable career.

We cannot even now retrace those events without feeling something of what was felt by the nation, when it was first known that the grave had closed over so much sorrow and so much glory;—something of what was felt by those who saw the hearse, with its long train of coaches, turn slowly northward, leaving behind it that cemetery, which had been consecrated by the dust of so many great poets, but of which the doors were closed against all that remained of Byron. We well remember that, on that day, rigid moralists could not refrain from weeping for one so young, so illustrious, so unhappy, gifted with such rare gifts, and tried by such strong temptations. It is unnecessary to make any reflections. The history carries its moral with it. Our age has indeed been fruitful of warnings to the eminent, and of consolations to the obscure. Two men have died within our recollection, who, at a time of life at which few people have completed their education, had raised themselves, each in his own department, to the height of glory. One of them died at Longwood; the other at Missolonghi.

It is always difficult to separate the literary character of a man who lives in our own time from his personal character. It is peculiarly difficult to make this separation in the case of Lord Byron. For it is scarcely too much to say, that Lord Byron never wrote without some reference, direct or indirect, to himself. The interest excited by the events of his life mingles itself in our minds, and probably in the minds of almost all our readers, with the interest which properly belongs to his works. A generation must pass away before

it will be possible to form a fair judgment of his books, considered merely as books. At present they are not only books, but relics. We will, however, venture, though with unfeigned diffidence, to offer some desultory remarks on his poetry.

His lot was cast in the time of a great literary revolution. That poetical dynasty which had dethroned the successors of Shakspeare and Spenser was, in its turn, dethroned by a race who represented themselves as heirs of the ancient line, so long dispossessed by usurpers. The real nature of this revolution has not, we think, been comprehended by the great majority of those who concurred in it.

If this question were proposed—wherein especially does the poetry of our times differ from that of the last century? ninety-nine persons out of a hundred would answer that the poetry of the last century was correct, but cold and mechanical, and that the poetry of our time, though wild and irregular, presented far more vivid images, and excited the passions far more strongly, than that of Parnell, of Addison, or of Pope. In the same manner, we constantly hear it said, that the poets of the age of Elizabeth had far more genius, but far less correctness, than those of the age of Anne. It seems to be taken for granted, that there is some necessary incompatibility, some antithesis, between correctness and creative power. We rather suspect that this notion arises merely from an abuse of words; and that it has been the parent of many of the fallacies which perplex the science of criticism.

What is meant by correctness in poetry? If by correctness be meant the conforming to rules which have their foundation in truth and in the principles of human nature, then correctness is only another name for excellence. If by correctness be meant the conforming to rules purely arbitrary, correctness may be another name for dulness and absurdity.

A writer who describes visible objects falsely, and violates the propriety of character—a writer who makes the mountains "nod their drowsy heads" at night, or a dying man take leave of the world with a rant like that of Maximin, may be said, in the high and just sense of the phrase, to write incorrectly. He violates the first great law of his art.

His imitation is altogether unlike the thing imitated. The four poets who are most eminently free from incorrectness of this description are Homer, Dante, Shakspeare, and Milton. They are, therefore, in one sense, and that the best sense, the most correct of poets.

When it is said that Virgil, though he had less genius than Homer, was a more correct writer, what sense is attached to the word correctness? Is it meant that the story of the Æneid is developed more skilfully than that of the Odyssey? that the Roman describes the face of the external world, or the emotions of the mind, more accurately than the Greek? that the characters of Achates and Mnestheus are more nicely discriminated, and more consistently supported, than those of Achilles, of Nestor, and of Ulysses? The fact incontestably is, that for every violation of the fundamental laws of poetry, which can be found in Homer, it would be easy to find twenty in Virgil.

Troilus and Cressida is perhaps of all the plays of Shakspeare that which is commonly considered as the most incorrect. Yet it seems to us infinitely more correct, in the sound sense of the term, than what are called the most correct plays of the most correct dramatists. Compare it, for example, with the Iphigénie of Racine. We are sure that the Greeks of Shakspeare bear a far greater resemblance than the Greeks of Racine, to the real Greeks who besieged Troy; and, for this reason, that the Greeks of Shakspeare are human beings, and the Greeks of Racine mere names; —mere words printed in capitals at the head of paragraphs of declamation. Racine, it is true, would have shuddered at the thought of making Agamemnon quote Aristotle. But of what use is it to avoid a single anachronism, when the whole play is one anachronism—the topics and phrases of Versailles in the camp of Aulis?

In the sense in which we are now using the word correctness, we think that Sir Walter Scott, Mr. Wordsworth, Mr. Coleridge, are far more correct writers than those who are commonly extolled as the models of correctness—Pope, for example, and Addison. The single description of a moonlight night in Pope's Iliad contains more inaccuracies than can be found in all the Excursion. There is not a single scene in Cato, in which every thing that conduces to

poetical illusion—the propriety of character, of language, of situation, is not more grossly violated than in any part of the Lay of the Last Minstrel. No man can possibly think that the Romans of Addison resemble the real Romans, so closely as the moss-troopers of Scott resemble the real moss-troopers. Watt Tinlinn and William of Deloraine are not, it is true, persons of so much dignity as Cato. But the dignity of the persons represented has as little to do with the correctness of poetry, as with the correctness of painting. We prefer a gipsy by Reynolds to his Majesty's head on a signpost, and a borderer by Scott to a senator by Addison.

In what sense, then, is the word correctness used by those who say, with the author of the Pursuits of Literature, that Pope was the most correct of English poets, and that next to Pope came the late Mr. Gifford? What is the nature and value of that correctness, the praise of which is denied to Macbeth, to Lear, and to Othello, and given to Hoole's translations and to all the Seatonian prize poems? We can discover no eternal rule, no rule founded in reason and in the nature of things, which Shakspeare does not observe much more strictly than Pope. But if by correctness be meant the conforming to a narrow legislation, which, while lenient to the *mala in se*, multiplies, without the shadow of a reason, the *mala prohibita*; if by correctness be meant a strict attention to certain ceremonious observances, which are no more essential to poetry than etiquette to good government, or than the washings of a Pharisee to devotion; then, assuredly, Pope may be a more correct poet than Shakspeare; and, if the code were a little altered, Colley Cibber might be a more correct poet than Pope. But it may well be doubted whether this kind of correctness be a merit; nay, whether it be not an absolute fault.

It would be amusing to make a digest of the irrational laws which bad critics have framed for the government of poets. First in celebrity and in absurdity stand the dramatic unities of place and time. No human being has ever been able to find any thing that could, even by courtesy, be called an argument for these unities, except that they have been deduced from the general practice of the Greeks. It requires no very profound examination to discover that the Greek dramas, often admirable as compositions, are, as ex-

hibitions of human character and human life, far inferior to the English plays of the age of Elizabeth. Every scholar knows that the dramatic part of the Athenian tragedies was at first subordinate to the lyrical part. It would, therefore, have been little less than a miracle, if the laws of the Athenian stage had been found to suit plays in which there was no chorus. All the great masterpieces of the dramatic art have been composed in direct violation of the unities, and could never have been composed if the unities had not been violated. It is clear, for example, that such a character as that of Hamlet could never have been developed within the limits to which Alfieri confined himself. Yet such was the reverence of literary men during the last century for these unities, that Johnson, who, much to his honour, took the opposite side, was, as he says, "frighted at his own temerity;" and "afraid to stand against the authorities which might be produced against him."

There are other rules of the same kind without end. "Shakspeare," says Rymer, "ought not to have made Othello black; for the hero of a tragedy ought always to be white." "Milton," says another critic, "ought not to have taken Adam for his hero; for the hero of an epic poem ought always to be victorious." "Milton," says another, "ought not to have put so many similes into his first book; for the first book of an epic poem ought always to be the most unadorned. There are no similes in the first book of the Iliad." "Milton," says another, "ought not to have placed in an epic poem such lines as these:

'I also erred in overmuch admiring.'"

And why not? The critic is ready with a reason—a lady's reason. "Such lines," says he, "are not, it must be allowed, unpleasing to the ear; but the redundant syllable ought to be confined to the drama, and not admitted into epic poetry." As to the redundant syllable in heroic rhyme, on serious subjects, it has been, from the time of Pope downward, proscribed by the general consent of all the correct school. No magazine would have admitted so incorrect a couplet as that of Drayton,

"As when we lived untouch'd with these disgraces,
When as our kingdom was our dear embraces."

Another law of heroic peetry, which, fifty years ago, was considered as fundamental, was, that there should be a pause—a comma at least, at the end of every couplet. It was also provided that there should never be a full stop except at the end of a couplet. Well do we remember to have heard a most correct judge of poetry revile Mr. Rogers for the incorrectness of that most sweet and graceful passage,

> "'Twas thine, Maria, thine, without a sigh,
> At midnight in a sister's arms to die,
> Nursing the young to health."

Sir Roger Newdigate is fairly entitled, we think, to be ranked among the great critics of this school. He made a law that none of the poems written for the prize which he established at Oxford should exceed fifty lines. This law seems to us to have at least as much foundation in reason as any of those which we have mentioned; nay, much more; for the world, we believe, is pretty well agreed in thinking that the shorter a prize poem is, the better.

We do not see why we should not make a few more rules of the same kind—why we should not enact that the number of scenes in every act shall be three, or some multiple of three; that the number of lines in every scene shall be an exact square; that the *dramatis personæ* shall never be more nor fewer than sixteen; and that, in heroic rhymes, every thirty-sixth line shall have twelve syllables. If we were to lay down these canons, and to call Pope, Goldsmith, and Addison incorrect writers, for not having complied with our whims, we should act precisely as those critics act, who find incorrectness in the magnificent imagery and the varied music of Coleridge and Shelley.

The correctness, which the last century prized so much, resembled the correctness of those pictures of the garden of Eden which we see in old Bibles—an exact square, enclosed by the rivers Pison, Gihon, Hiddekel, and Euphrates, each with a convenient bridge in the centre—rectangular beds of flowers—a long canal, neatly bricked and railed in—the tree of knowledge, clipped like one of the limes behind the Tuileries, standing in the centre of the grand alley—the snake twined round it—the man on the right hand, the woman on the left, and the beasts drawn up in an exact circle round

them. In one sense, the picture is correct enough: that is to say, the squares are correct; the circles are correct; the man and woman are in a most correct line with the tree; and the snake forms a most correct spiral.

But if there were a painter so gifted, that he should place in the canvas that glorious paradise, seen by the interior eye of him whose outward sight had failed with long watching and labouring for liberty and truth—if there were a painter who could set before us the mazes of the sapphire brook, the lake with its fringe of myrtles, the flowery meadows, the grottoes overhung by vines, the forests shining with Hesperian fruit, and with the plumage of gorgeous birds, the massy shade of that nuptial bower which showered down roses on the sleeping lovers—what should we think of a connoisseur who should tell us that this painting, though finer than the absurd picture of the old Bible, was not so correct? Surely we should answer—It is both finer and more correct; and it is finer because it is more correct. It is not made up of correctly drawn diagrams; but it is a correct painting, a worthy representation of that which it is intended to represent.

It is not in the fine arts alone that this false correctness is prized by narrow-minded men—by men who cannot distinguish means from ends, or what is accidental from what is essential. Mr. Jourdain admired correctness in fencing. "You had no business to hit me then. You must never thrust in *quart* till you have thrust in *tierce*." M. Tomès liked correctness in medical practice. "I stand up for Artemius. That he killed his patient is plain enough. But still he acted quite according to rule. A man dead is a man dead; and there is an end of the matter. But if rules are to be broken, there is no saying what consequences may follow." We have heard of an old German officer, who was a great admirer of correctness in military operations. He used to revile Bonaparte for spoiling the science of war, which had been carried to such an exquisite perfection by Marshal Daun. "In my youth we used to march and countermarch all the summer without gaining or losing a square league, and then we went into winter quarters. And now comes an ignorant, hot-headed young man, who flies about from Boulogne to Ulm, and from Ulm to the middle of Moravia, and fights battles in December. The whole sys-

tem of his tactics is monstrously incorrect." The world is of opinion, in spite of critics like these, that the end of fencing is to hit, that the end of medicine is to cure, that the end of war is to conquer, and that those means are the most correct which best accomplish the ends.

And has poetry no end, no eternal and immutable principles? Is poetry, like heraldry, mere matter of arbitrary regulation? The heralds tell us that certain scutcheons and bearings denote certain conditions, and that to put colours on colours, or metals on metals, is false blazonry. If all this were reversed; if every coat of arms in Europe were new-fashioned; if it were decreed that *or* should never be placed but on *argent*, or *argent* but on *or*; that illegitimacy should be denoted by a *lozenge*, and widowhood by a *bend*, the new science would be just as good as the old science, because both the new and the old would be good for nothing. The mummery of Portcullis and Rogue Dragon, as it has no other value than that which caprice has assigned to it, may well submit to any laws which caprice may impose on it. But it is not so with that great imitative art, to the power of which all ages, the rudest and the most enlightened, bear witness. Since its first great masterpieces were produced, every thing that is changeable in this world has been changed. Civilization has been gained, lost, gained again. Religions, and languages, and forms of government, and usages of private life, and the modes of thinking, all have undergone a succession of revolutions. Every thing has passed away but the great features of nature, the heart of man, and the miracles of that art of which it is the office to reflect back the heart of man and the features of nature. Those two strange old poems, the wonder of ninety generations, still retain all their freshness. They still command the veneration of minds enriched by the literature of many nations and ages. They are still, even in wretched translations, the delight of school-boys. Having survived ten thousand capricious fashions; having seen successive codes of criticism become obsolete, they still remain, immortal with the immortality of truth, the same when perused in the study of an English scholar, as when they were first chanted at the banquets of the Ionian princes.

Poetry is, as that most acute of human beings, Aristotle,

said, more than two thousand years ago, imitation. It is an art analogous in many respects to the art of painting, sculpture, and acting. The imitations of the painter, the sculptor, and the actor are, indeed, within certain limits, more perfect than those of the poet. The machinery which the poet employs consists merely of words; and words cannot, even when employed by such an artist as Homer or Dante, present to the mind images of visible objects quite so lively and exact as those which we carry away from looking on the works of the brush and the chisel. But, on the other hand, the range of poetry is infinitely wider than that of any other imitative art, or than that of all the other imitative arts together. The sculptor can imitate only form; the painter only form and colour; the actor, until the poet supplies him with words, only form, colour, and motion. Poetry holds the outer world in common with the other arts. The heart of man is the province of poetry, and of poetry alone. The painter, the sculptor, and the actor, when the actor is unassisted by the poet, can exhibit no more of human passion and character than that small portion which overflows into the gesture and the face —always an imperfect, often a deceitful, sign of that which is within. The deeper and more complex parts of human nature can be exhibited by means of words alone. Thus the objects of the imitation of poetry are the whole external and the whole internal universe, the face of nature, the vicissitudes of fortune, man as he is in himself, man as he appears in society, all things of which we can form an image in our minds, by combining together parts of things which really exist. The domain of this imperial art is commensurate with the imaginative faculty.

An art essentially imitative ought not surely to be subjected to rules which tend to make its imitations less perfect than they would otherwise be; and those who obey such rules ought to be called, not correct, but incorrect artists. The true way to judge of the rules by which English poetry was governed during the last century, is to look at the effects which they produced.

It was in 1780 that Johnson completed his Lives of the Poets. He tells us in that work, that, since the time of Dryden, English poetry had shown no tendency to relapse

into its original savageness; that its language had been refined, its numbers tuned, and its sentiments improved. It may, perhaps, be doubted whether the nation had any great reason to exult in the refinements and improvements which gave it Douglas for Othello, and the Triumphs of Temper for the Faerie Queen.

It was during the thirty years which preceded the appearance of Johnson's Lives, that the diction and versification of English poetry were, in the sense in which the word is commonly used, most correct. Those thirty years form the most deplorable part of our literary history. They have bequeathed to us scarcely any poetry which deserves to be remembered. Two or three hundred lines of Gray, twice as many of Goldsmith, a few stanzas of Beattie and Collins, a few strophes of Mason, and a few clever prologues and satires, were the masterpieces of this age of consummate excellence. They may all be printed in one volume, and that volume would be by no means a volume of extraordinary merit. It would contain no poetry of the highest class, and little which could be placed very high in the second class. The Paradise Regained, or Comus, would outweigh it all.

At last, when poetry had fallen into such utter decay that Mr. Hayley was thought a great poet, it began to appear that the excess of the evil was about to work the cure. Men became tired of an insipid conformity to a standard which derived no authority from nature or reason. A shallow criticism had taught them to ascribe a superstitious value to the spurious correctness of poetasters. A deeper criticism brought them back to the free correctness of the first great masters. The eternal laws of poetry regained their power, and the temporary fashions which had superseded those laws went after the wig of Lovelace and the hoop of Clarissa.

It was in a cold and barren season that the seeds of that rich harvest, which we have reaped, were first sown. While poetry was every year becoming more feeble and more mechanical, while the monotonous versification which Pope had introduced, no longer redeemed by his brilliant wit and his compactness of expression, palled on the ear of the public, the great works of the dead were every day attracting more

and more of the admiration which they deserved. The plays of Shakspeare were better acted, better edited, and better known than they had ever been. Our noble old ballads were again read with pleasure, and it became a fashion to imitate them. Many of the imitations were altogether contemptible; but they showed that men had at least begun to admire the excellence which they could not rival. A literary revolution was evidently at hand. There was a ferment in the minds of men, a vague craving for something new, a disposition to hail with delight any thing which might at first sight wear the appearance of originality. A reforming age is always fertile of impostors. The same excited state of public feeling which produced the great separation from the see of Rome, produced also the excesses of the Anabaptists. The same stir in the public mind of Europe which overthrew the abuses of the old French government, produced the Jacobins and Theophilanthropists. Macpherson and the Della Cruscans were to the true reformers of English poetry what Cnipperdoling was to Luther, or what Clootz was to Turgot. The public was never more disposed to believe stories without evidence, and to admire books without merit. Any thing which could break the dull monotony of the correct school was acceptable.

The forerunner of the great restoration of our literature was Cowper. His literary career began and ended at nearly the same time with that of Alfieri. A parallel between Alfieri and Cowper may, at first sight, seem as unpromising as that which a loyal Presbyterian minister is said to have drawn, in 1745, between George the Second and Enoch. It may seem that the gentle, shy, melancholy Calvinist, whose spirit had been broken by fagging at school, who had not courage to earn a livelihood by reading the titles of bills in the House of Lords, and whose favourite associates were a blind old lady and an evangelical divine, could have nothing in common with the haughty, ardent, and voluptuous nobleman, the horse-jockey, the libertine, who fought Lord Ligonier in Hyde Park, and robbed the Pretender of his queen. But though the private lives of these remarkable men present scarcely any points of resemblance, their literary lives bear a close analogy to each other. They both found poetry in its lowest state of degradation, feeble, arti-

ficial, and altogether nerveless. They both possessed precisely the talents which fitted them for the task of raising it from that deep abasement. They cannot, in strictness, be called great poets. They had not in any very high degree the creative power,

> "The vision and the faculty divine;"

but they had great vigour of thought, great warmth of feeling, and what, in their circumstance, was above all things important, a manliness of taste which approached to roughness. They did not deal in mechanical versification and conventional phrases. They wrote concerning things, the thought of which set their hearts on fire; and thus what they wrote, even when it wanted every other grace, had that inimitable grace which sincerity and strong passion impart to the rudest and most homely compositions. Each of them sought for inspiration in a noble and affecting subject, fertile of images, which had not yet been hackneyed. Liberty was the muse of Alfieri; religion was the muse of Cowper. The same truth is found in their lighter pieces. They were not among those who deprecated the severity or deplored the absence of an unreal mistress in melodious commonplaces. Instead of raving about imaginary Chloes and Sylvias, Cowper wrote of Mrs. Unwin's knitting-needles. The only love-verses of Alfieri were addressed to one whom he truly and passionately loved. "Tutte le rime amorose che seguono," says he, "tutte sono per essa, e ben sue, e di lei solamente poichè mai d'altra donna per certo non canterò."

These great men were not free from affectation; but their affectation was directly opposed to the affectation which generally prevailed. Each of them has expressed in strong and bitter language the contempt which he felt for the effeminate poetasters who were in fashion both in England and Italy. Cowper complains that

> "Manner is all in all, whate'er is writ,
> The substitute for genius, taste, and wit."

He praised Pope; yet he regretted that Pope had

> "Made poetry a mere mechanic art,
> And every warbler had his tune by heart."

Alfieri speaks with similar scorn of the tragedies of his predecessors. "Mi cadevano dalle mani per la languidezza, trivialtà e prolissità dei modi e del verso, senza parlare poi della snervatezza dei pensieri. Or perchè mai questa nostra divina lingua, sì maschia anco, ed energica, e feroce, in bocca di Dante, dovra elle farci così sbiadata ed eunuca nel dialogo tragico."

To men thus sick of the languid manner of their contemporaries, ruggedness seemed a venial fault, or rather a positive merit. In their hatred of meretricious ornament, and of what Cowper calls "creamy smoothness," they erred on the opposite side. Their style was too austere, their versification too harsh. It is not easy, however, to overrate the service which they rendered to literature. Their merit is rather that of demolition than that of construction. The intrinsic value of their poems is considerable; but the example which they set of mutiny against an absurd system was invaluable. The part which they performed was rather that of Moses than that of Joshua. They opened the house of bondage, but they did not enter the promised land.

During the twenty years which followed the death of Cowper, the revolution in English poetry was fully consummated. None of the writers of this period, not even Sir Walter Scott, contributed so much to the consummation as Lord Byron. Yet he, Lord Byron, contributed to it unwillingly, and with constant self-reproach and shame. All his tastes and inclinations led him to take part with the school of poetry which was going out, against the school which was coming in. Of Pope himself he spoke with extravagant admiration. He did not venture directly to say that the little man of Twickenham was a greater poet than Shakspeare or Milton; but he hinted pretty clearly that he thought so. Of his contemporaries, scarcely any had so much of his admiration as Mr. Gifford, who, considered as a poet, was merely Pope, without Pope's wit and fancy; and whose satires are decidedly inferior in vigour and poignancy to the very imperfect juvenile performance of Lord Byron himself. He now and then praised Mr. Wordsworth and Mr. Coleridge, but ungraciously and without cordiality. When he attacked them, he brought his whole soul to the work. Of the most elaborate of Mr. Wordsworth's poems

he could find nothing to say, but that it was "clumsy, and frowsy, and his aversion." Peter Bell excited his spleen to such a degree that he apostrophized the shades of Pope and Dryden, and demanded of them whether it were possible that such trash could evade contempt! In his heart he thought his own Pilgrimage of Harold inferior to his Imitation of Horace's Art of Poetry—a feeble echo of Pope and Johnson. This insipid performance he repeatedly designed to publish, and was withheld only by the solicitations of his friends. He has distinctly declared his approbation of the unities, the most absurd laws by which genius was ever held in servitude. In one of his works, we think in his Letter to Mr. Bowles, he compares the poetry of the eighteenth century to the Parthenon, and that of the nineteenth to a Turkish mosque; and boasts that, though he had assisted his contemporaries in building their grotesque and barbarous edifice, he had never joined them in defacing the remains of a chaster and more graceful architecture. In another letter, he compares the change which had recently passed on English poetry to the decay of Latin poetry after the Augustan age. In the time of Pope, he tells his friend, it was all Horace with us. It is all Claudian now.

For the great old masters of the art he had no very enthusiastic admiration. In his Letter to Mr. Bowles he uses expressions which clearly indicate that he preferred Pope's Iliad to the original. Mr. Moore confesses that his friend was no very fervent admirer of Shakspeare. Of all the poets of the first class, Lord Byron seems to have admired Dante and Milton most. Yet, in the fourth canto of Childe Harold, he places Tasso, a writer not merely inferior to them, but of quite a different order of mind, on at least a footing of equality with them. Hr. Hunt is, we suspect, quite correct in saying that Lord Byron could see little or no merit in Spenser.

But Lord Byron the critic, and Lord Byron the poet, were two very different men. The effects of his theory may indeed often be traced in his practice. But his disposition led him to accommodate himself to the literary taste of the age in which he lived; and his talents would have enabled him to accommodate himself to the taste of any age. Though he said much of his contempt for men, and though he

boasted that, amidst all the inconstancy of fortune and of fame, he was all-sufficient to himself, his literary career indicated nothing of that lonely and unsocial pride which he affected. We cannot conceive him, like Milton or Wordsworth, defying the criticisms of his contemporaries, retorting their scorn, and labouring on a poem in the full assurance that it would be unpopular, and in the full assurance that it would be immortal. He has said, by the mouth of one of his heroes, in speaking of political greatness, that "he must serve who gain would sway;" and this he assigns as a reason for not entering into political life. He did not consider that the sway which he exercised in literature had been purchased by servitude—by the sacrifice of his own taste to the taste of the public.

He was the creature of his age; and wherever he had lived, he would have been the creature of his age. Under Charles the First, he would have been more quaint than Donne. Under Charles the Second, the rants of his rhyming plays would have pitted it, boxed it, and galleried it, with those of any Bayes or Bilboa. Under George the First, the monotonous smoothness of his versification and the terseness of his expression would have made Pope himself envious.

As it was, he was the man of the last thirteen years of the eighteenth century, and of the first twenty-three years of the nineteenth century. He belonged half to the old and half to the new school of poetry. His personal taste led him to the former, his thirst of fame to the latter; his talents were equally suited to both. His fame was a common ground, on which the zealots of both sides—Gifford, for example, and Shelley—might meet. He was the representative, not of either literary party, but of both at once, and of their conflict, and of the victory by which that conflict was terminated. His poetry fills and measures the whole of the vast interval through which our literature has moved since the time of Johnson. It touches the Essay on Man at the one extremity and the Excursion at the other.

There are several parallel instances in literary history. Voltaire, for example, was the connecting link between the France of Louis the Fourteenth and the France of Louis the Sixteenth—between Racine and Boileau on the one side, and Condorcet and Beaumarchais on the other. He, like

Lord Byron put himself at the head of an intellectual revolution. He railed at all the time, murmuring at it, sneering at it, yet choosing rather to move before his age in any direction than to be left behind and forgotten. Dryden was the connecting link between the literature of the age of James the First and the literature of the age of Anne. Oromasdes and Arimanes fought for him—Arimanes carried him off; but his heart was to the last with Oromasdes. Lord Byron was in the same manner the mediator between two generations, between two hostile poetical sects. Though always sneering at Mr. Wordsworth, he was yet, though perhaps unconsciously, the interpreter between Mr. Wordsworth and the multitude. In the Lyrical Ballads and the Excursion, Mr. Wordsworth appeared as the high-priest of a worship of which Nature was the idol. No poems have ever indicated so exquisite a perception of the beauty of the outer world, or so passionate a love and reverence for that beauty. Yet they were not popular; and it is not likely that they ever will be popular as the works of Sir Walter Scott are popular. The feeling which pervaded them was too deep for general sympathy; their style was often too mysterious for general comprehension. They made a few esoteric disciples, and many scoffers. Lord Byron founded what may be called an exoteric Lake school of poetry; and all the readers of poetry in England, we might say in Europe, hastened to sit at his feet. What Mr. Wordsworth had said like a recluse, Lord Byron said like a man of the world, with less profound feeling, but with more perspicuity, energy, and conciseness. We would refer our readers to the last two cantos of Childe Harold and to Manfred, in proof of these observations.

Lord Byron, like Mr. Wordsworth, had nothing dramatic in his genius. He was, indeed, the reverse of a great dramatist—the very antithesis to a great dramatist. All his characters—Harold looking back on the western sky, from which his country and the sun are receding together; the Giaour, standing apart in the gloom of the side-aisle, and casting a haggard scowl from under his long hood at the crucifix and the censer; Conrad, leaning on his sword by the watch-tower; Lara, smiling on the dancers; Alp, gazing steadily on the fatal cloud as it passes before the moon;

Manfred, wandering among the precipices of Berne; Azo, on the judgment-seat; Ugo, at the bar; Lambro, frowning on the siesta of his daughter and Juan; Cain, presenting his unacceptable offering—all are essentially the same. The varieties are varieties merely of age, situation, and costume. If ever Lord Byron attempted to exhibit men of a different kind, he always made them either insipid or unnatural. Selim is nothing. Bonnivart is nothing. Don Juan, in the first and best cantos, is a feeble copy of the Page in the Marriage of Figaro. Johnson, the man whom Juan meets in the slave-market, is a most striking failure. How differently would Sir Walter Scott have drawn a bluff, fearless Englishman in such a situation! The portrait would have seemed to walk out of the canvas.

Sardanapalus is more hardly drawn than any dramatic personage that we can remember. His heroism and his effeminacy, his contempt of death, and his dread of a weighty helmet, his kingly resolution to be seen in the foremost ranks, and the anxiety with which he calls for a looking-glass, that he may be seen to advantage, are contrasted with all the point of Juvenal. Indeed, the hint of the character seems to have been taken from what Juvenal says of Otho,—

> "Speculum civilis sarcina belli.
> Nimirum summi ducis est occidere Galbam.
> Et curare cutem; summi constantia civis
> Bebriaci campo spolium affectare Palatî,
> Et pressum in faciem digitis extendere panem."

These are excellent lines in a satire. But it is not the business of the dramatist to exhibit characters in this sharp, antithetical way. It is not in this way that Shakspeare makes Prince Hal rise from the rake of Eastcheap into the hero of Shrewsbury, and sink again into the rake of Eastcheap. It is not thus that Shakspeare has exhibited the union of effeminacy and valour in Antony. A dramatist cannot commit a greater error than that of following those pointed descriptions of character in which satirists and historians indulge so much. It is by rejecting what is natural that satirists and historians produce these striking characters. Their great object generally is to ascribe to every

man as many contradictory qualities as possible; and this is an object easily attained. By judicious selections and judicious exaggeration, the intellect and the disposition of any human being might be described as being made up of nothing but startling contrasts. If the dramatist attempts to create a being answering to one of these descriptions, he fails; because he reverses an imperfect analytical process. He produces, not a man, but a personified epigram. Very eminent writers have fallen into this snare. Ben Johnson has given us an Hermogenes taken from the lively lines of Horace; but the inconsistency which is so amusing in the satire appears unnatural and disgusts us in the play. Sir Walter Scott has committed a far more glaring error of the same kind, in the novel of Peveril. Admiring, as every reader must admire, the keen and vigorous lines in which Dryden satirized the Duke of Buckingham, he attempted to make a Duke of Buckingham to suit them—a real living Zimri; and he made, not a man, but the most grotesque of all monsters. A writer who should attempt to introduce into a play or a novel such a Wharton as the Wharton of Pope, or a Lord Hervey answering to Sporus, would fail in the same manner.

But to return to Lord Byron: his women, like his men, are all of one breed. Haidee is a half-savage and girlish Julia; Julia is a civilized and matronly Haidee. Leila is a wedded Zuleika—Zuleika a virgin Leila. Gulnare and Medora appear to have been intentionally opposed to each other; yet the difference is a difference of situation only. A slight change of circumstance would, it should seem, have sent Gulnare to the lute of Medora, and armed Medora with the dagger of Gulnare.

It is hardly too much to say that Lord Byron could exhibit only one man and only one woman—a man proud, moody, cynical, with defiance on his brow, and misery in his heart; a scorner of his kind, implacable in revenge, yet capable of deep and strong affection;—a woman all softness and gentleness, loving to caress and to be caressed, but capable of being transformed by love into a tigress.

Even these two characters, his only two characters, he could not exhibit dramatically. He exhibited them in the manner, not of Shakspeare, but of Clarendon. He ana-

lyzed them. He made them analyze themselves, but he did not make them show themselves. He tells us, for example, in many lines of great force and spirit, that the speech of Lara was bitterly sarcastic, that he talked little of his travels, that if much questioned about them, his answers became short, and his brow gloomy. But we have none of Lara's sarcastic speeches, or short answers. It is not thus that the great masters of human nature have portrayed human beings. Homer never tells us that Nestor loved to tell long stories about his youth; Shakspeare never tells us that in the mind of Iago every thing that is beautiful and endearing was associated with some filthy and debasing idea.

It is curious to observe the tendency which the dialogue of Lord Byron always has to lose its character of dialogue, and to become soliloquy. The scenes between Manfred and the Chamois-hunter, between Manfred and the Witch of the Alps, between Manfred and the Abbot, are instances of this tendency. Manfred, after a few unimportant speeches, has all the talk to himself. The other interlocutors are nothing more than good listeners. They drop an occasional question, or ejaculation, which sets Manfred off again on the inexhaustible topic of his personal feelings. If we examine the fine passages in Lord Byron's dramas, the description of Rome, for example, in Manfred, the description of a Venetian revel in Marino Faliero, the dying invective which the old Doge pronounces against Venice, we shall find there is nothing dramatic in them; that they derive none of their effect from the character or situation of the speaker; and that they would have been as fine, or finer, if they had been published as fragments of blank verse by Lord Byron. There is scarcely a speech in Shakspeare of which the same could be said. No skilful reader of the plays of Shakspeare can endure to see what are called the fine things taken out, under the name of "Beauties" or of "Elegant Extracts;" or to hear any single passage—"To be or not to be," for example, quoted as a sample of the great poet. "To be or not to be" has merit undoubtedly as a composition. It would have merit if put into the mouth of a chorus. But its merit as a composition vanishes when compared with its merit as belonging to Hamlet. It is not too much

to say that the great plays of Shakspeare would lose less by being deprived of all the passages which are commonly called the fine passages, than those passages lose by being read separately from the play. This is perhaps the highest praise which can be given to a dramatist.

On the other hand, it may be doubted whether there is, in all Lord Byron's plays, a single remarkable passage which owes any portion of its interest or effect to its connection with the characters or the action. He has written only one scene, as far as we can recollect, which is dramatic even in manner—the scene between Lucifer and Cain. The conference in that scene is animated, and each of the interlocutors has a fair share of it. But this scene, when examined, will be found to be a confirmation of our remarks. It is a dialogue only in form. It is a soliloquy in essence. It is in reality a debate carried on within one single, unquiet, and skeptical mind. The questions and the answers, the objections and the solutions, all belong to the same character.

A writer who showed so little of dramatic skill in works professedly dramatic was not likely to write narrative with dramatic effect. Nothing could indeed be more rude and careless than the structure of his narrative poems. He seems to have thought, with the hero of the Rehearsal, that the plot was good for nothing but to bring in fine things. His two longest works, Childe Harold and Don Juan, have no plan whatever. Either of them might have been extended to any length, or cut short at any point. The state in which the Giaour appears illustrates the manner in which all his poems were constructed. They are all, like the Giaour, collections of fragments; and, though there may be no empty spaces marked by asterisks, it is still easy to perceive, by the clumsiness of the joining, where the parts, for the sake of which the whole was composed, end and begin.

It was in description and meditation that he excelled. "Description," as he said in Don Juan, "was his *forte*." His manner is indeed peculiar, and is almost unequalled—rapid, sketchy, full of vigour; the selection happy; the strokes few and bold. In spite of the reverence which we feel for the genius of Mr. Wordsworth, we cannot but think that the minuteness of his descriptions often diminishes

their effect. He has accustomed himself to gaze on nature with the eye of a lover—to dwell on every feature, and to mark every change of aspect. Those beauties which strike the most negligent observer, and those which only a close attention discovers, are equally familiar to him, and are equally prominent in his poetry. The proverb of old Hesiod, that half is often more than the whole, is eminently applicable to description. The policy of the Dutch, who cut down most of the precious trees in the Spice Islands, in order to raise the value of what remained, was a policy which poets would do well to imitate. It was a policy which no poet understood better than Lord Byron. Whatever his faults might be, he was never, while his mind retained its vigour, accused of prolixity.

His descriptions, great as was their intrinsic merit, derived their principal interest from the feeling which always mingled with them. He was himself the beginning, the middle, and the end of all his own poetry, the hero of every tale, the chief object in every landscape. Harold, Lara, Manfred, and a crowd of other characters, were universally considered merely as loose incognitos of Byron; and there is every reason to believe that he meant them to be so considered. The wonders of the outer world, the Tagus, with the mighty fleets of England riding on its bosom, the towers of Cintra overhanging the shaggy forest of cork-trees and willows, the glaring marble of Pentelicus, the banks of the Rhine, the glaciers of Clarens, the sweet Lake of Leman, the dell of Egeria, with its summer-birds and rustling lizards, the shapeless ruins of Rome, overgrown with ivy and wall-flowers, the stars, the sea, the mountains—all were mere accessaries—the background to one dark and melancholy figure.

Never had any writer so vast a command of the whole eloquence of scorn, misanthropy, and despair. That Marah was never dry. No art could sweeten, no draughts could exhaust its perennial waters of bitterness. Never was there such variety in monotony as that of Byron. From maniac laughter to piercing lamentation, there was not a single note of human anguish of which he was not master. Year after year, and month after month, he continued to repeat that to be wretched is the destiny of all; that to be emi-

nently wretched, is the destiny of the eminent; that all the desires by which we are cursed lead alike to misery;—if they are not gratified, to the misery of disappointment; if they are gratified, to the misery of satiety. His principal heroes are men who have arrived by different roads at the same goal of despair, who are sick of life, who are at war with society, who are supported in their anguish only by an unconquerable pride, resembling that of Prometheus on the rock, or of Satan in the burning marl; who can master their agonies by the force of their will, and who, to the last, defy the whole power of earth and heaven. He always described himself as a man of the same kind with his favourite creations, as a man whose heart had been withered, whose capacity for happiness was gone, and could not be restored; but whose invincible spirit dared the worst that could befall him here or hereafter.

How much of this morbid feeling sprung from an original disease of mind, how much from real misfortune, how much from the nervousness of dissipation, how much of it was fanciful, how much of it was merely affected, it is impossible for us, and would probably have been impossible for the most intimate friends of Lord Byron to decide. Whether there ever existed, or can ever exist, a person answering to the description which he gave of himself, may be doubted: but that he was not such a person is beyond all doubt. It is ridiculous to imagine that a man whose mind was really imbued with scorn of his fellow-creatures would have published three or four books every year in order to tell them so; or that a man, who could say with truth that he neither sought sympathy nor needed it, would have admitted all Europe to hear his farewell to his wife, and his blessings on his child. In the second canto of Childe Harold, he tells us that he is insensible to fame and obloquy:

> "Ill may such contest now the spirit move,
> Which heeds nor keen reproof nor partial praise."

Yet we know, on the best evidence, that a day or two before he published these lines, he was greatly, indeed childishly, elated by the compliments paid to his maiden speech in the House of Lords.

We are far, however, from thinking that his sadness was altogether feigned. He was naturally a man of great sensibility; he had been ill-educated; his feelings had been early exposed to sharp trials; he had been crossed in his boyish love; he had been mortified by the failure of his first literary efforts; he was straitened in pecuniary circumstances; he was unfortunate in his domestic relations; the public treated him with cruel injustice; his health and spirits suffered from his dissipated habits of life; he was, on the whole, an unhappy man. He early discovered that, by parading his unhappiness before the multitude, he excited an unrivalled interest. The world gave him every encouragement to talk about his mental sufferings. The effect which his first confessions produced induced him to affect much that he did not feel; and the affectation probably reacted on his feelings. How far the character in which he exhibited himself was genuine, and how far theatrical, would probably have puzzled himself to say.

There can be no doubt that this remarkable man owed the vast influence which he exercised over his contemporaries at least as much to his gloomy egotism as to the real power of his poetry. We never could very clearly understand how it is that egotism, so unpopular in conversation, should be so popular in writing; or how it is that men who affect in their compositions qualities and feelings which they have not, impose so much more easily on their contemporaries than on posterity. The interest which the loves of Petrarch excited in his own time, and the pitying fondness with which half Europe looked upon Rousseau, are well known. To readers of our time, the love of Petrarch seems to have been love of that kind which breaks no hearts; and the sufferings of Rousseau to have deserved laughter rather than pity—to have been partly counterfeited, and partly the consequences of his own perverseness and vanity.

What our grandchildren may think of the character of Lord Byron as exhibited in his poetry, we will not pretend to guess. It is certain, that the interest which he excited during his life is without a parallel in literary history. The feeling with which young readers of poetry regarded him can be conceived only by those who have expe-

rienced it. To people who are unacquainted with the real calamity, "nothing is so dainty sweet as lovely melancholy." This faint image of sorrow has in all ages been considered by young gentlemen as an agreeable excitement. Old gentlemen and middle-aged gentlemen have so many real causes of sadness, that they are rarely inclined "to be as sad as night only for wantonness." Indeed they want the power almost as much as the inclination. We know very few persons engaged in active life, who even if they were to procure stools to be melancholy upon, and were to sit down with all the premeditation of Master Stephen, would be able to enjoy much of what somebody calls "the ecstasy of wo."

Among that large class of young persons whose reading is almost entirely confined to works of imagination, the popularity of Lord Byron was unbounded. They bought pictures of him, they treasured up the smallest relics of him; they learned his poems by heart, and did their best to write like him, and to look like him. Many of them practised at the glass, in the hope of catching the curl of the upper lip, and the scowl of the brow, which appear in some of his portraits. A few discarded their neckcloths, in imitation of their great leader. For some years, the Minerva press sent forth no novel without a mysterious, unhappy, Lara-like peer. The number of hopeful undergraduates and medical students who became things of dark imaginings, on whom the freshness of the heart ceased to fall like dew, whose passions had consumed themselves to dust, and to whom the relief of tears was denied, passes all calculation. This was not the worst. There was created in the minds of many of these enthusiasts a pernicious and absurd association between intellectual power and moral depravity. From the poetry of Lord Byron they drew a system of ethics, compounded of misanthropy and voluptuousness; a system in which the two great commandments were, to hate your neighbour, and to love your neighbour's wife.

This affectation has passed away; and a few more years will destroy whatever yet remains of that magical potency which once belonged to the name of Byron. To us he is still a man, young, noble and unhappy. To our children

he will be merely a writer; and their impartial judgment will appoint his place among writers, without regard to his rank, or to his private history. That his poetry will undergo a severe sifting; that much of what has been admired by his contemporaries will be rejected as worthless, we have little doubt. But we have as little doubt, that, after the closest scrutiny, there will still remain much that can only perish with the English language.

Southey's Edition of the Pilgrim's Progress.*

[*Edinburgh Review.*]

THIS is an eminently beautiful and splendid edition of a book which well deserves all that the printer and the engraver can do for it. The life of Bunyan is, of course, not a performance which can add much to the literary reputation of such a writer as Mr. Southey. But it is written in excellent English, and, for the most part, in an excellent spirit. Mr. Southey propounds, we need not say, many opinions from which we altogether dissent; and his attempts to excuse the odious persecution to which Bunyan was subjected have sometimes moved our indignation. But we will avoid this topic. We are at present much more inclined to join in paying homage to the genius of a great man, than to engage in a controversy concerning church government and toleration.

We must not pass without notice the engravings with which this beautiful volume is decorated. Some of Mr. Heath's woodcuts are admirably designed and executed. Mr. Martin's illustrations do not please us quite so well. His Valley of the Shadow of Death is not that Valley of the Shadow of Death which Bunyan imagined. At all events, it is not that dark and horrible glen which has from childhood been in our mind's eye. The valley is a cavern: the quagmire is a lake: the straight path runs zigzag; and Christian appears like a speck in the darkness of the im-

* *The Pilgrim's Progress, with a Life of John Bunyan.* By ROBERT SOUTHEY, Esq., LL.D., Poet-laureate. Illustrated with Engravings. 8vo. London, 1830.

mense vault. We miss, too, those hideous forms which make so striking a part of the description of Bunyan, and which Salvator Rosa would have loved to draw. It is with unfeigned diffidence that we pronounce judgment on any question relating to the art of painting. But it appears to us that Mr. Martin has not of late been fortunate in his choice of subjects. He should never have attempted to illustrate the Paradise Lost. There can be no two manners more directly opposed to each other, than the manner of his painting and the manner of Milton's poetry. Those things which are mere accessaries in the descriptions, become the principal objects in the pictures; and those figures which are most prominent in the descriptions can be detected in the pictures only by a very close scrutiny. Mr. Martin has succeeded perfectly in representing the pillars and candelabras of Pandemonium; but he has forgotten that Milton's Pandemonium is merely the background to Satan. In the picture, the Archangel is scarcely visible amidst the endless colonnades of his infernal palace. Milton's Paradise, again, is merely the background to his Adam and Eve. But in Mr. Martin's picture, the landscape is every thing. Adam, Eve, and Raphael attract much less notice than the lake and the mountains, the gigantic flowers and the giraffes which feed upon them. We have read, we forget where, that James the Second sat to Verelst, the great flower-painter. When the performance was finished, his Majesty appeared in the midst of sunflowers and tulips, which completely drew away all attention from the central figure. All who looked at the portrait took it for a flower-piece. Mr. Martin, we think, introduces his immeasurable spaces, his innumerable multitudes, his gorgeous prodigies of architecture and landscape, almost as unseasonably as Verelst introduced his flower-pots and nosegays. If Mr. Martin were to paint Lear in the storm, the blazing sky, the sheets of rain, the swollen torrents, and the tossing forest, would draw away all attention from the agonies of the insulted king and father. If he were to paint the death of Lear, the old man, asking the bystanders to undo his button, would be thrown into the shade by a vast blaze of pavilions, standards, armour, and herald's coats. He would illustrate the Orlando Furioso well, the Orlando Innamorato still bet-

ter, the Arabian nights best of all. Fairy palaces and gardens, porticoes of agate, and groves flowering with emeralds and rubies, inhabited by people for whom noboby cares, these are his proper domain. He would succeed admirably in the enchanted ground of Alcina, or the mansion of Aladdin. But he should avoid Milton and Bunyan.

The characteristic peculiarity of the Pilgrim's Progress is, that it is the only work of its kind which possesses a strong human interest. Other allegories only amuse the fancy. The allegory of Bunyan has been read by many thousands with tears. There are some good allegories in Johnson's works, and some of still higher merit by Addison. In these performances there is, perhaps, as much wit and ingenuity as in the Pilgrim's Progress. But the pleasure which is produced by the Vision of Mirza, or the Vision of Theodore, the genealogy of Wit, or the contest between Rest and Labour, is exactly similar to the pleasure which we derive from one of Cowley's Odes, or from a Canto of Hudibras. It is a pleasure which belongs wholly to the understanding, and in which the feelings have no part whatever. Nay, even Spenser himself, though assuredly one of the greatest poets that ever lived, could not succeed in the attempt to make allegory interesting. It was in vain that he lavished the riches of his mind on the House of Pride and the House of Temperance. One unpardonable fault, the fault of tediousness, pervades the whole of the Faerie Queen. We become sick of Cardinal Virtues and Deadly Sins, and long for the society of plain men and women. Of the persons who read the first Canto, not one in ten reaches the end of the First Book, and not one in a hundred perseveres to the end of the poem. Very few and very weary are those who are in at the death of the Blatant Beast. If the last six books, which are said to have been destroyed in Ireland, had been preserved, we doubt whether any heart less stout than that of a commentator would have held out to the end.

It is not so with the Pilgrim's Progress. That wonderful book, while it obtains admiration from the most fastidious critics, is loved by those who are too simple to admire it. Doctor Johnson, all whose studies were desultory, and who hated, as he said, to read books through, made an exception

in favour of the Pilgrim's Progress. That work, he said, was one of the two or three works which he wished longer. It was by no common merit that the illiterate sectary extracted praise like this from the most pedantic of critics and the most bigoted of Tories. In the wildest parts of Scotland the Pilgrim's Progress is the delight of the peasantry. In every nursery the Pilgrim's Progress is a greater favourite than Jack the Giant-Killer. Every reader knows the straight and narrow path, as well as he knows a road in which he has gone backward and forward a hundred times. This is the highest miracle of genius—that things which are not should be as though they were, that the imaginations of one mind should become the personal recollections of another. And this miracle the tinker has wrought. There is no ascent, no declivity, no resting-place, no turn-stile, with which we are not perfectly acquainted. The wicket-gate, and the desolate swamp which separates it from the City of Destruction; the long line of road, as straight as a rule can make it; the Interpreter's house, and all its fair shows; the prisoner in the iron cage; the palace, at the doors of which armed men kept guard, and on the battlements of which walked persons clothed all in gold; the cross and the sepulchre; the steep hill and the pleasant arbour; the stately front of the House Beautiful by the wayside; the low green valley of Humiliation, rich with grass and covered with flocks, all are as well known to us as the sights of our own street. Then we come to the narrow place where Apollyon strode right across the whole breadth of the way, to stop the journey of Christian, and where afterwards the pillar was set up to testify how bravely the pilgrim had fought the good fight. As we advance, the valley becomes deeper and deeper. The shade of the precipices on both sides falls blacker and blacker. The clouds gather overhead. Doleful voices, the clanking of chains, and the rushing of many feet to and fro, are heard through the darkness. The way, hardly discernible in gloom, runs close by the mouth of the burning pit, which sends forth its flames, its noisome smoke, and its hideous shapes, to terrify the adventurer. Thence he goes on, amidst the snares and pitfalls, with the mangled bodies of those who have perished lying in the ditch by his side. At the end of the long dark valley, he passes the dens in which

the old giants dwelt, amidst the bones and ashes of those whom they had slain.

Then the road passes straight on through a waste moor, till at length the towers of a distant city appear before the traveller; and soon he is in the midst of the innumerable multitudes of Vanity Fair. There are the jugglers and the apes, the shops and the puppet-shows. There are Italian Row, and French Row, and Spanish Row, and Britain Row, with their crowds of buyers, sellers, and loungers, jabbering all the languages of the earth.

Thence we go on by the little hill of the silver mine, and through the meadow of lilies, along the bank of that pleasant river which is bordered on both sides by fruit-trees. On the left side, branches off the path leading to that horrible castle, the court-yard of which is paved with the skulls of pilgrims; and right onward are the sheepfolds and orchards of the Delectable Mountains.

From the Delectable Mountains, the way lies through the fogs and briers of the Enchanted Ground, with here and there a bed of soft cushions spread under a green arbour. And beyond is the land of Beulah, where the flowers, the grapes, and the songs of birds never cease, and where the sun shines night and day. Thence are plainly seen the golden pavements and streets of pearl, on the other side of that black and cold river over which there is no bridge.

All the stages of the journey, all the forms which cross or overtake the pilgrims,—giants and hobgoblins, ill-favoured ones, and shining ones; the tall, comely, swarthy Madam Bubble, with her great purse by her side, and her fingers playing with the money; the black man in the bright vesture; Mr. Worldly-Wiseman, and my Lord Hategood; Mr. Talkative, and Mrs. Timorous—are all actually existing beings to us. We follow the travellers through their allegorical progress with interest not inferior to that with which we follow Elizabeth from Siberia to Moscow, or Jeanie Deans from Edinburgh to London. Bunyan is almost the only writer that ever gave to the abstract the interest of the concrete. In the works of many celebrated authors, men are mere personifications. We have not an Othello, but jealousy; not an Iago, but perfidy; not a Brutus, but patri-

otism. The mind of Bunyan, on the contrary, was so imaginative, that personifications, when he dealt with them, became men. A dialogue between two qualities, in his dream, has more dramatic effect than a dialogue between two human beings in most plays. In this respect, the genius of Bunyan bore a great resemblance to that of a man who had very little else in common with him, Percy Bysshe Shelley. The strong imagination of Shelley made him an idolater in his own despite. Out of the most indefinite terms of a hard, cold, dark, metaphysical system, he made a gorgeous Pantheon, full of beautiful, majestic, and lifelike forms. He turned atheism itself into a mythology, rich with visions as glorious as the gods that live in the marble of Phidias, or the virgin saints that smile on us from the canvas of Murillo. The Spirit of Beauty, the Principle of Good, the Principle of Evil, when he treated of them, ceased to be abstractions. They took shape and colour. They were no longer mere words; but "intelligible forms;" "fair humanities;" objects of love, of adoration, or of fear. As there can be no stronger signs of a mind destitute of the poetical faculty than that tendency, which was so common among the writers of the French school, to turn images into abstractions—Venus, for example, into Love, Minerva into Wisdom, Mars into War, and Bacchus into Festivity—so there can be no stronger sign of a mind truly poetical, than a disposition to reverse this abstracting process, and to make individuals out of generalities. Some of the metaphysical and ethical theories of Shelley were certainly most absurd and pernicious. But we doubt whether any modern poet has possessed in an equal degree the highest qualities of the great ancient masters. The words bard and inspiration, which seem so cold and affected when applied to other modern writers, have a perfect propriety when applied to him. He was not an author, but a bard. His poetry seems not to have been an art, but an inspiration. Had he lived to the full age of man, he might not improbably have given to the world some great work of the very highest rank in design and execution. But, alas!

ὁ Δαφνις ἐβα ροον· ἑκλυστε δἰνα
τον Μωσαις φιλον ανδρα, τον ου Νυμφαισιν απεχθη.

But we must return to Bunyan. The Pilgrim's Progress undoubtedly is not a perfect allegory. The types are often inconsistent with each other; and sometimes the allegorical disguise is altogether thrown off. The river, for example, is emblematic of death, and we are told that every human being must pass through the river. But Faithful does not pass through it. He is martyred, not in shadow, but in reality, at Vanity Fair. Hopeful talks to Christian about Esau's birthright, and about his own convictions of sin, as Bunyan might have talked with one of his own congregation. The damsels at the House Beautiful catechise Christiana's boys, as any good ladies might catechise any boys at a Sunday-school. But we do not believe that any man, whatever might be his genius, and whatever his good luck, could long continue a figurative history without falling into many inconsistencies. We are sure that inconsistencies, scarcely less gross than the worst into which Bunyan has fallen, may be found in the shortest and most elaborate allegories of the Spectator and the Rambler. The Tale of a Tub and the History of John Bull swarm with similar errors, if the name of error can be properly applied to that which is unavoidable. It is not easy to make a simile go on all-fours. But we believe that no human ingenuity could produce such a centripede as a long allegory, in which the correspondence between the outward sign and the thing signified should be exactly preserved. Certainly no writer, ancient or modern, has yet achieved the adventure. The best thing, on the whole, that an allegorist can do, is to present to his readers a succession of analogies, each of which may separately be striking and happy, without looking very nicely to see whether they harmonize with each other. This Bunyan has done; and, though a minute scrutiny may detect inconsistencies in every page of his tale, the general effect which the tale produces on all persons, learned and unlearned, proves that he has done well. The passages which it is most difficult to defend, are those in which he altogether drops the allegory, and puts into the mouth of his pilgrims religious ejaculations and disquisitions, better suited to his own pulpit at Bedford or Reading, than to the Enchanted Ground of the Interpreter's Garden. Yet even these passages, though we will not undertake to defend them against

the objections of critics, we feel that we could ill spare. We feel that the story owes much of its charms to these occasional glimpses of solemn and affecting subjects, which will not be hidden, which force themselves through the veil, and appear before us in their native aspect. The effect is not unlike that which is said to have been produced on the ancient stage, when the eyes of the actor were seen flaming through his mask, and giving life and expression to what would else have been inanimate and uninteresting disguise.

It is very amusing and very instructive to compare the Pilgrim's Progress with the Grace Abounding. The latter work is indeed one of the most remarkable pieces of autobiography in the world. It is a full and open confession of the fancies which passed through the mind of an illiterate man, whose affections were warm, whose nerves were irritable, whose imagination was ungovernable, and who was under the influence of the strongest religious excitement. In whatever age Bunyan had lived, the history of his feelings would, in all probability, have been very curious. But the time in which his lot was cast was the time of a great stirring of the human mind. A tremendous burst of public feeling, produced by the tyranny of the hierarchy, menaced the old ecclesiastical institutions with destruction. To the gloomy regularity of one intolerant church had succeeded the license of innumerable sects, drunk with the sweet and heady must of their new liberty. Fanaticism, engendered by persecution, and destined to engender fresh persecution in turn, spread rapidly through society. Even the strongest and most commanding minds were not proof against this strange taint. Any time might have produced George Fox and James Naylor; but to one time alone belong the frantic delusions of such a statesman as Vane, and the hysterical tears of such a soldier as Cromwell.

The history of Bunyan is the history of a most excitable mind in an age of excitement. By most of his biographers he has been treated with gross injustice. They have understood in a popular sense all those strong terms of self-condemnation which he employed in a theological sense. They have, therefore, represented him as an abandoned wretch, reclaimed by means almost miraculous; or, to use their favourite metaphor, "as a brand plucked from the burning."

Mr. Ivimey calls him the depraved Bunyan, and the wicked tinker of Elstow. Surely Mr. Ivimey ought to have been too familiar with the bitter accusations which the most pious people are in the habit of bringing against themselves, to understand literally all the strong expressions which are to be found in the Grace Abounding. It is quite clear, as Mr. Southey most justly remarks, that Mr. Bunyan never was a vicious man. He married very early; and he solemnly declares that he was strictly faithful to his wife. He does not appear to have been a drunkard. He owns, indeed, that when a boy, he never spoke without an oath. But a single admonition cured him of this bad habit for life; and the cure must have been wrought early: for at eighteen he was in the army of the Parliament; and if he had carried the vice of profaneness into that service, he would doubtless have received something more than an admonition from Sergeant Bind-their-kings-in-chains, or Captain Hew-Agag-in-pieces-before-the-Lord. Bell-ringing and playing at hockey on Sundays seems to have been the worst vices of this depraved tinker. They would have passed for virtues with Archbishop Laud. It is quite clear that, from a very early age, Bunyan was a man of a strict life, and of a tender conscience. "He had been," says Mr. Southey, "a blackguard." Even this we think too hard a censure. Bunyan was not, we admit, so fine a gentleman as Lord Digby; yet he was a blackguard no otherwise than as every tinker that ever lived has been a blackguard. Indeed, Mr. Southey acknowledges this: "Such he might have been expected to be by his birth, breeding, and vocation. Scarcely, indeed, by possibility could he have been otherwise." A man, whose manners and sentiments are decidedly below those of his class, deserves to be called a blackguard. But it is surely unfair to apply so strong a word of reproach to one who is only what the great mass of every community must inevitably be.

Those horrible internal conflicts, which Bunyan has described with so much power of language, prove, not that he was a worse man than his neighbours, but that his mind was constantly occupied by religious considerations, that his fervour exceeded his knowledge, and that his imagination exercised despotic power over his body and mind. He

heard voices from heaven; he saw strange visions of distant hills, pleasant and sunny as his own Delectable Mountains; from those seats he was shut out and placed in a dark and horrible wilderness, where he wandered through ice and snow, striving to make his way into the happy region of light. At one time he was seized with an inclination to work miracles. At another time he thought himself actually possessed by the devil; he could distinguish the blasphemous whispers; he felt his infernal enemy pulling at his clothes behind him; he spurned with his feet, and struck with his hands at the destroyer. Sometimes he was tempted to sell his part in the salvation of mankind. Sometimes a violent impulse urged him to start up from his food, to fall on his knees and break forth into prayer. At length he fancied that he had committed the unpardonable sin; his agony convulsed his robust frame. He was, he says, as if his breastbone would split; and this he took for a sign that he was destined to burst asunder like Judas. The agitation of his nerves made all his movements tremulous; and this trembling, he supposed, was a visible mark of his reprobation, like that which had been set on Cain. At one time, indeed, an encouraging voice seemed to rush in at the window, like the noise of wind, but very pleasant, and commanded, as he says, a great calm in his soul. At another time, a word of comfort "was spoke loud unto him; it showed a great word; it seemed to be writ in great letters." But these intervals of ease were short. His state, during two years and a half, was generally the most horrible that the human mind can imagine. "I walked," says he, with his own peculiar eloquence, "to a neighbouring town, and sat down upon a settle in the street, and fell into a very deep pause about the most fearful state my sin had brought me to; and after long musing, I lifted up my head; but methought I saw as if the sun that shineth in the heavens did grudge to give me light; and as if the very stones in the streets and tiles upon the houses did band themselves against me. Methought that they all combined together to banish me out of the world! I was abhorred of them, and unfit to dwell among them, because I had sinned against the Saviour. Oh, how happy now was every creature over I! for they stood fast and kept their station; but I was

gone and lost." Scarcely any madhouse could produce an instance of delusion so strong, or of misery so acute.

It was through this Valley of the Shadow of Death, overhung by darkness, peopled with devils, resounding with blasphemy and lamentation, and passing amidst quagmires, snares, and pitfalls, close by the very mouth of hell, that Bunyan journeyed to that bright and fruitful land of Beulah, in which he sojourned during the latter days of his pilgrimage. The only trace which his cruel sufferings and temptations seem to have left behind them, was an affectionate compassion for those who were still in the state in which he had once been. Religion has scarcely ever worn a form so calm and soothing as in his allegory. The feeling which predominates through the whole book is a feeling of tenderness for weak, timid, and harassed minds. The character of Mr. Fearing, of Mr. Feeble-Mind, of Mr. Despondency and his daughter Miss Muchafraid; the account of poor Littlefaith, who was robbed by the three thieves of his spending-money; the description of Christian's terror in the dungeons of Giant Despair, and in his passage through the river, all clearly show how strong a sympathy Bunyan felt, after his own mind had become clear and cheerful, for persons afflicted with religious melancholy.

Mr. Southey, who has no love for the Calvinists, admits that, if Calvinism had never worn a blacker appearance than in Bunyan's works, it would never have become a term of reproach. In fact, those works of Bunyan with which we are acquainted are by no means more Calvinistic than the homilies of the Church of England. The moderation of his opinions on the subject of predestination gave offence to some zealous persons. We have seen an absurd allegory, the heroine of which is named Hephzibah, written by some raving supralapsarian preacher, who was dissatisfied with the mild theology of the Pilgrim's Progress. In this foolish book, if we recollect rightly, the Interpreter is called the Enlightener, and the House Beautiful is Castle Strength. Mr. Southey tells us that the Catholics had also their Pilgrim's Progress without a Giant Pope, in which the Interpreter is the Director, and the House Beautiful Grace's Hall. It is surely a remarkable proof of the power of Bunyan's genius, that two religious parties, both of which regarded

his opinions as heterodox, should have had recourse to him for assistance.

There are, we think, some characters and scenes in the Pilgrim's Progress which can be fully comprehended and enjoyed only by persons familiar with the history of the times through which Bunyan lived. The character of Mr. Greatheart, the guide, is an example. His fighting is, of course, allegorical; but the allegory is not strictly preserved. He delivers a sermon on imputed righteousness to his companions; and, soon after, he gives battle to Giant Grim, who had taken upon him to back the lions. He expounds the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah to the household and guests of Gaius; and then sallies out to attack Slaygood, who was of the nature of flesh-eaters, in his den. These are inconsistencies; but they are inconsistencies which add, we think, to the interest of the narrative. We have not the least doubt that Bunyan had in view some stout old Greatheart of Naseby and Worcester, who prayed with his men before he drilled them; who knew the spiritual state of every dragoon in his troop; and who, with the praises of God in his mouth, and a two-edged sword in his hand, had turned to flight on many fields of battle the swearing, drunken bravoes of Rupert and Lunsford.

Every age produces such men as By-ends; but the middle of the seventeenth century was eminently prolific of such men. Mr. Southey thinks that the satire was aimed at some particular individual, and this seems by no means improbable. At all events, Bunyan must have known many of those hypocrites who followed religion only when religion walked in silver slippers, when the sun shone, and when the people applauded. Indeed, he might have easily found all the kindred of By-ends among the public men of his time. He might have found among the peers, my Lord Turn-about, my Lord Time-server, and my Lord Fair-speech; in the House of Commons, Mr. Smooth-man, Mr. Any-thing, and Mr. Facing-both-ways; nor would "the parson of the parish, Mr. Two-Tongues," have been wanting. The town of Bedford probably contained more than one politician, who, after contriving to raise an estate by seeking the Lord during the reign of the saints, contrived to keep what he had got by persecuting the saints during the reign of the strumpets;

and more than one priest who, during repeated changes in the discipline and doctrines of the church, had remained constant to nothing but his benefice.

One of the most remarkable passages in the Pilgrim's Progress is that in which the proceedings against Faithful are described. It is impossible to doubt that Bunyan intended to satirize the mode in which state trials were conducted under Charles the Second. The license given to the witnesses for the prosecution, the shameless partiality and ferocious insolence of the judge, the precipitancy and the blind rancour of the jury, remind us of those odious mummeries which, from the Restoration to the Revolution, were merely forms preliminary to hanging, drawing, and quartering. Lord Hategood performs the office of counsel for the prisoners as well as Scroggs himself could have performed it.

"JUDGE. Thou runagate, heretic, and traitor, hast thou heard what these honest gentlemen have witnessed against thee?

"FAITHFUL. May I speak a few words in my own defence?

"JUDGE. Sirrah, sirrah! thou deservest to live no longer, but to be slain immediately upon the place; yet, that all men may see our gentleness to thee, let us hear what thou, vile runagate, hast to say."

No person who knows the state trials can be at a loss for parallel cases. Indeed, write what Bunyan would, the baseness and cruelty of the lawyers of those times "sinned up to it still," and even went beyond it. The imaginary trial of Faithful before a jury composed of personified vices was just and merciful when compared with the real trial of Lady Alice Lisle before that tribunal where all the vices sat in the person of Jeffries.

The style of Bunyan is delightful to every reader, and invaluable as a study to every person who wishes to obtain a wide command over the English language. The vocabulary is the vocabulary of the common people. There is not an expression, if we except a few technical terms of theology, which would puzzle the rudest peasant. We have observed several pages which do not contain a single word of more than two syllables; yet no writer has said more exactly what he meant to say. For magnificence, for pathos,

for vehement exhortation, for subtle disquisition, for every purpose of the poet, the orator, and the divine, this homely dialect, the dialect of plain workingmen, was perfectly sufficient. There is no book in our literature on which we could so readily stake the fame of the old unpolluted English language; no book which shows so well how rich that language is in its own proper wealth, and how little it has been improved by all that it has borrowed.

Cowper said, forty or fifty years ago, that he dared not name John Bunyan in his verse, for fear of moving a sneer. To our refined forefathers, we suppose Lord Roscommon's Essay on Translated Verse, and the Duke of Buckinghamshire's Essay on Poetry, appeared to be compositions infinitely superior to the allegory of the preaching tinker. We live in better times; and we are not afraid to say that, though there were many clever men in England during the latter half of the seventeenth century, there were only two great creative minds. One of those minds produced the Paradise Lost, the other the Pilgrim's Progress.

APPENDIX TO VOL. I.

Pompeii.

A POEM WHICH OBTAINED THE CHANCELLOR'S MEDAL AT THE CAMBRIDGE COMMENCEMENT, JULY, 1819.

Oh! land to Memory and to Freedom dear,
Land of the melting lyre and conquering spear,
Land of the vine-clad hill, the fragant grove,
Of arts and arms, of Genius and of Love,
Hear, fairest Italy. Though now no more
The glittering eagles awe the Atlantic shore,
Nor at thy feet the gorgeous Orient flings
The blood-bought treasures of her tawny kings,
Though vanished all that formed thine old renown,
The laurel garland, and the jewelled crown,
The avenging poniard, the victorious sword,
Which reared thine empire, or thy rights restored,
Yet still the constant Muses haunt thy shore,
And love to linger where they dwelt of yore.
If e'er of old they deigned, with favouring smile,
To tread the sea-girt shores of Albion's isle,
To smooth with classic arts our rugged tongue,
And warm with classic glow the British song,
Oh! bid them snatch their silent hearts which wave
On the lone oak that shades thy Maro's grave,*

* See Eustace's description of the tomb of Virgil, on the Neapolitan coast.

And sweep with magic hand the slumbering strings,
To fire the poet.—For thy clime he sings,
Thy scenes of gay delight and wild despair,
Thy varied forms of awful and of fair.
How rich that climate's sweets, how wild its storms,
What charms array it, and what rage deforms,
Well have thy mouldering walls, Pompeii, known,
Decked in those charms, and by that rage o'erthrown.
Sad city, gaily dawned thy latest day,
And poured its radiance on a scene as gay.
The leaves scarce rustled in the sighing breeze;
In azure dimples curled the sparkling seas,
And as the golden tide of light they quaffed,
Campania's sunny meads and vineyards laughed,
While gleamed each lichened oak and giant pine
On the far sides of swarthy Apennine.
Then mirth and music through Pompeii rung;
Then verdant wreaths on all her portals hung;
Her sons, with solemn rite and jocund lay,
Hailed the glad splendours of that festal day.
With fillets bound the hoary priests advance,
And rosy virgins braid the choral dance.
The rugged warrior here unbends awhile
His iron front, and deigns a transient smile;
There, frantic with delight, the ruddy boy
Scarce treads on earth, and bounds and laughs with joy.
From every crowded altar perfumes rise
In billowy clouds of fragrance to the skies.
The milk-white monarch of the herd they lead,
With gilded horns, at yonder shrine to bleed;
And while the victim crops the broidered plain,
And frisks and gambols towards the destined fane,
They little deem that like himself they stray
To death, unconscious, o'er a flowery way;
Heedless, like him, the impending stroke await,
And sport and wanton on the brink of fate.
What 'vails it that where yonder heights aspire,
With ashes piled, and scathed with rills of fire,
Gigantic phantoms dimly seem to glide,
In misty files, along the mountain's side,

To view with threatening scowl your fated lands,
And toward your city point their shadowy hands ?*
In vain celestial omens prompted fear,
And nature's signal spoke the ruin near.
In vain through many a night ye viewed from far
The meteor flag of elemental war
Unroll its blazing folds from yonder height,
In fearful sign of earth's intestine fight.
In vain Vesuvius groaned with wrath suppressed,
And muttered thunder in his burning breast.
Long since the Eagle from that flaming peak
Hath soared with screams a safer nest to seek.
Awed by the infernal beacon's fitful glare,
The howling fox hath left his wonted lair;
Nor dares the browzing goat in venturous leap
To spring, as erst, from dizzy steep to steep.—
Man only mocks the peril. Man alone
Defies the sulphurous flame, the warning groan.
While instinct, humbler guardian, wakes and saves,
Proud reason sleeps, nor knows the doom it braves.
But see, the opening theatre invites
The fated myriads to its gay delights.
In, in they swarm, tumultuous as the roar
Of foaming breakers on a rocky shore.
Th' enraptured throng in breathless transport views
The gorgeous temple of the Tragic Muse.
There, while her wand in shadowy pomp arrays
Ideal scenes, and forms of other days
Fair as the hopes of youth, a radiant band,
The sister arts around her footstool stand,
To deck their Queen, and lend a milder grace
To the stern beauty of that awful face.
Far, far around the ravished eye surveys
The sculptured forms of gods and heroes blaze.

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* Dio Cassius relates that figures of gigantic size appeared, for some time previous to the destruction of Pompeii, on the summits of Vesuvius. This appearance was probably occasioned by the fantastic forms which the smoke from the crater of the volcano assumed.

Above, the echoing roofs the peal prolong
Of lofty converse, or melodious song,
While, as the tones of passion sink or swell,
Admiring thousands own the moral spell,
Melt with the melting strains of fancied wo,
With terror stricken, or with transport glow.
Oh! for a voice like that which pealed of old
Through Salem's cedar courts and shrines of gold,
And in wild accents round the trembling dome
Proclaimed the havoc of avenging Rome;
While every palmy arch and sculptured tower
Shook with the footsteps of the parting power.
Such voice might check your tears, which idly stream
For the vain phantoms of the poet's dream;
Might bid those terrors rise, those sorrows flow,
For other perils, and for nearer wo.
The hour is come. Even now the sulphurous cloud
Involves the city in its funeral shroud,
And far along Campania's azure sky
Expands its dark and boundless canopy.
The Sun, though throned on heaven's meridian height,
Burns red and rayless through that sickly night.
Each bosom felt at once the shuddering thrill,
At once the music stopped. The song was still.
None in that cloud's portentous shade might trace
The fearful changes of another's face.
But through that horrid stillness each could hear
His neighbour's throbbing heart beat high with fear.
A moment's pause succeeds. Then wildly rise
Grief's sobbing plaints and terror's frantic cries.
The gates recoil; and towards the narrow pass
In wild confusion rolls the living mass.
Death—when thy shadow sceptre waves away
From his sad couch the prisoner of decay,
Though friendship view the close with glistening eye,
And love's fond lips imbibe the parting sigh,
By torture racked, by kindness soothed in vain,
The soul still clings to being and to pain.
But when have wider terrors clothed thy brow,
Or keener torments edged thy dart than now,

When with thy regal horrors vainly strove
The law of nature and the power of Love?
On mothers babes in vain for mercy call,
Beneath the feet of brothers brothers fall.
Behold the dying wretch in vain upraise
Towards yonder well-known face the accusing gaze;
See trampled to the earth the expiring maid
Clings round her lover's feet, and shrieks for aid.
Vain is the imploring glance, the frenzied cry;
All, all is fear; to succour is to die.—
Saw ye how wild, how red, how broad a light
Burst on the darkness of that mid-day night,
As fierce Vesuvius scattered o'er the vale
Her drifted flames and sheets of burning hail,
Shook hell's wan lightnings from his blazing cone,
And gilded heaven with meteors not its own?
The morn all blushing rose; but sought in vain
The snowy villas and the flowery plain,
The purpled hills with marshalled vineyards gay,
The domes that sparkled in the sunny ray.
Where art or nature late hath deck'd the scene
With blazing marble or with spangled green,
There, streaked by many a fiery torrent's bed,
A boundless waste of hoary ashes spread.
Along that dreary waste where lately rung
The festal lay which smiling virgins sung,
Where rapture echoed from the warbling lute,
And the gay dance resounded, all is mute.—
Mute!—Is it Fancy shapes that wailing sound
Which faintly murmurs from the blasted ground,
Or live there still, who breathing in the tomb,
Curse the dark refuge which delays their doom,
In massive vaults, on which the incumbent plain
And ruined city heap their weight in vain?
Oh! who may sing that hour of mortal strife,
When nature calls on Death, yet clings to life?
Who paint the wretch that draws sepulchral breath,
A living prisoner in the house of Death?
Pale as the corpse which loads the funeral pile,
With face convulsed that writhes a ghastly smile,

Behold him speechless move with hurried pace,
Incessant, round his dungeon's caverned space,
Now shrink in terror, and now groan in pain,
Gnaw his white lips and strike his burning brain,
Till Fear o'erstrained in stupor dies away,
And Madness wrests her victim from dismay.
His arms sink down; his wild and stony eye
Glares without sight on blackest vacancy.
He feels not, sees not: wrapped in senseless trance
His soul is still and listless as his glance.
One cheerless blank, one rayless mist is there,
Thoughts, senses, passions, live not with despair.
Haste, Famine, haste, to urge the destined close,
And lull the horrid scene to stern repose.
Yet ere, dire Fiend, thy lingering tortures cease,
And all be hushed in still sepulchral peace,
Those caves shall wilder, darker deeds behold
Than e'er the voice of song or fable told,
Whate'er dismay may prompt, or madness dare,
Feasts of the grave, and banquets of despair.—
Hide, hide the scene; and o'er the blasting sight
Fling the dark veil of ages and of night.
Go, seek Pompeii now;—with pensive tread
Roam through the silent city of the dead.
Explore each spot, where still, in ruin grand,
Her shapeless piles and tottering columns stand,
Where the pale ivy's clasping wreaths o'ershade
The ruined temple's moss-clad colonnade,
Or violets on the hearth's cold marble wave,
And muse in silence on a people's grave.
Fear not.—No sign of death thine eyes shall scare,
No, all is beauty, verdure, fragrance there.
A gentle slope includes the fatal ground
With odorous shrubs and tufted myrtles crowned;
Beneath, o'ergrown with grass, or wreathed with flowers,
Lie tombs and temples, columns, baths, and towers.
As if in mockery, Nature seems to dress
In all her charms the beauteous wilderness,
And bids her gayest flowrets twine and bloom
In sweet profusion o'er a city's tomb.

With roses here she decks the untrodden path,
With lilies fringes there the stately bath;
The acanthus'* spreading foliage here she weaves
Round the gay capital which mocks its leaves;
There hangs the sides of every mouldering room
With tapestry from her own fantastic loom,
Wallflowers and weeds, whose glowing hues supply
With simple grace the purple's Tyrian dye.
The ruined city sleeps in fragrant shade,
Like the pale corpse of some Athenian maid,†
Whose marble arms, cold brows, and snowy neck
The fairest flowers of fairest climates deck,
Meet types of her whose form their wreaths array,
Of radiant beauty, and of swift decay.
Advance, and wander on through crumbling halls,
Through prostrate gates and ivied pedestals,
Arches, whose echoes now no chariots rouse,
Tombs, on whose summits goats undaunted browse.
See where yon ruined wall on earth reclines,
Through weeds and moss the half-seen painting shines,
Still vivid midst the dewy cowslips grows,
Or blends its colours with the blushing rose.
Thou lovely, ghastly scene of fair decay,
In beauty awful, and midst horrors gay,
Renown more wide, more bright shall gild thy name,
Than thy wild charms or fearful doom could claim.
Immortal spirits, in whose deathless song
Latium and Athens yet their reign prolong,
And from their thrones of fame and empire hurled,
Still sway the sceptre of the mental world,
You in whose breasts the flames of Pindus beamed,
Whose copious lips with richer persuasion streamed,
Whose minds unravelled nature's mystic plan,
Or traced the mazy labyrinth of man:

* The capital of the Corinthian pillar is carved, as is well known, in imitation of the acanthus. Mons. de Chauteaubriand, as I have found since this Poem was written, has employed the same image in his Travels.

† It is the custom of the modern Greeks to adorn corpses profusely with flowers.

Bend, glorious spirits, from your blissful bowers,
And broidered couches of unfading flowers,
While round your locks the Elysian garlands blow
With sweeter odours, and with brighter glow.
Once more, immortal shades, atoning Fame
Repairs the honours of each glorious name.
Behold Pompeii's opening vaults restore
The long-lost treasures of your ancient lore,
The vestal radiance of poetic fire,
The stately buskin and the tuneful lyre,
The wand of eloquence, whose magic sway
The sceptres and the swords of earth obey,
And every mighty spell, whose strong control
Could nerve or melt, could fire or soothe the soul.
And thou, sad city, raise thy drooping head,
And share the honours of the glorious dead.
Had Fate reprieved thee till the frozen North
Poured in wild swarms its hoarded millions forth,
Till blazing cities marked where Albion trod,
Or Europe quaked beneath *the scourge of God*,*
No lasting wreath had graced thy funeral pall,
No fame redeemed the horrors of thy fall.
Now shall thy deathless memory live entwined
With all that conquers, rules, or charms the mind.
Each lofty thought of Poet or of Sage,
Each grace of Virgil's lyre or Tully's page.
Like theirs whose genius consecrates thy tomb,
Thy fame shall snatch from time a greener bloom,
Shall spread where'er the Muse has rear'd her throne,
And live renowned in accents yet unknown;
Earth's utmost bounds shall join the glad acclaim,
And distant Camus bless Pompeii's name.

* The well-known name of Attila.

The Battle of Ivry.

[*Knight's Quarterly Magazine.*]

[Henry the Fourth, on his accession to the French crown, was opposed by a large part of his subjects under the Duke of Mayenne, with the assistance of Spain and Savoy. In March, 1590, he gained a decisive victory over that party at Ivry. Before the battle, he addressed his troops—"My children, if you lose sight of your colours, rally to my white plume—you will always find it in the path to honour and glory." His conduct was answerable to his promise. Nothing could resist his impetuous valour, and the leaguers underwent a total and bloody defeat. In the midst of the rout, Henry followed, crying—"Save the French!" and his clemency added a number of the enemies to his own army. *Aikin's Biographical Dictionary.*]

Now glory to the Lord of Hosts, from whom all glories are!
And glory to our Sovereign Liege, King Henry of Navarre!
Now let there be the merry sound of music and the dance,
Through thy cornfields green, and sunny vines, oh! pleasant land of France.
And thou, Rochelle, our own Rochelle, proud city of the waters,
Again let rapture light the eyes of all thy mourning daughters.
As thou wert constant in our ills, be joyous in our joy,
For cold, and stiff, and still are they who wrought thy walls annoy.
Hurrah! hurrah! a single field hath turned the chance of war;
Hurrah! hurrah! for Ivry and King Henry of Navarre.

Oh! how our hearts were beating, when, at the dawn of day,
We saw the army of the League drawn out in long array;
With all its priest-led citizens, and all its rebel peers,
And Appenzel's stout infantry, and Egmont's Flemish spears.
There rode the brood of false Lorraine, the curses of our land,
And dark Mayenne was in the midst, a truncheon in his hand;
And as we looked on them, we thought of Seine's empurpled flood,
And good Coligni's hoary hair all dabbled with his blood;
And we cried unto the living God, who rules the fate of war,
To fight for his own holy name and Henry of Navarre.

The King is come to marshal us, in all his armour drest,
And he has bound a snow-white plume upon his gallant crest;
He looked upon his people, and a tear was in his eye;
He looked upon the traitors, and his glance was stern and high.
Right graciously he smiled on us, as rolled from wing to wing,
Down all our line, in deafening shout, "God save our lord, the King."

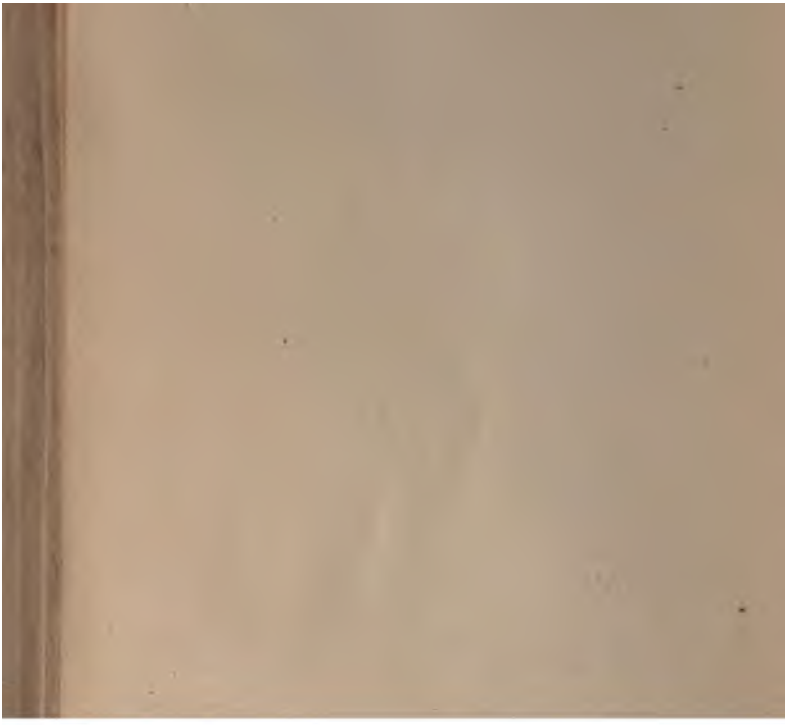
"And if my standard-bearer fall, as fall full well he may—
For never saw I promise yet of such a bloody fray—
Press where ye see my white plume shine, amidst the ranks of war,
And be your oriflamme to-day the helmet of Navarre."

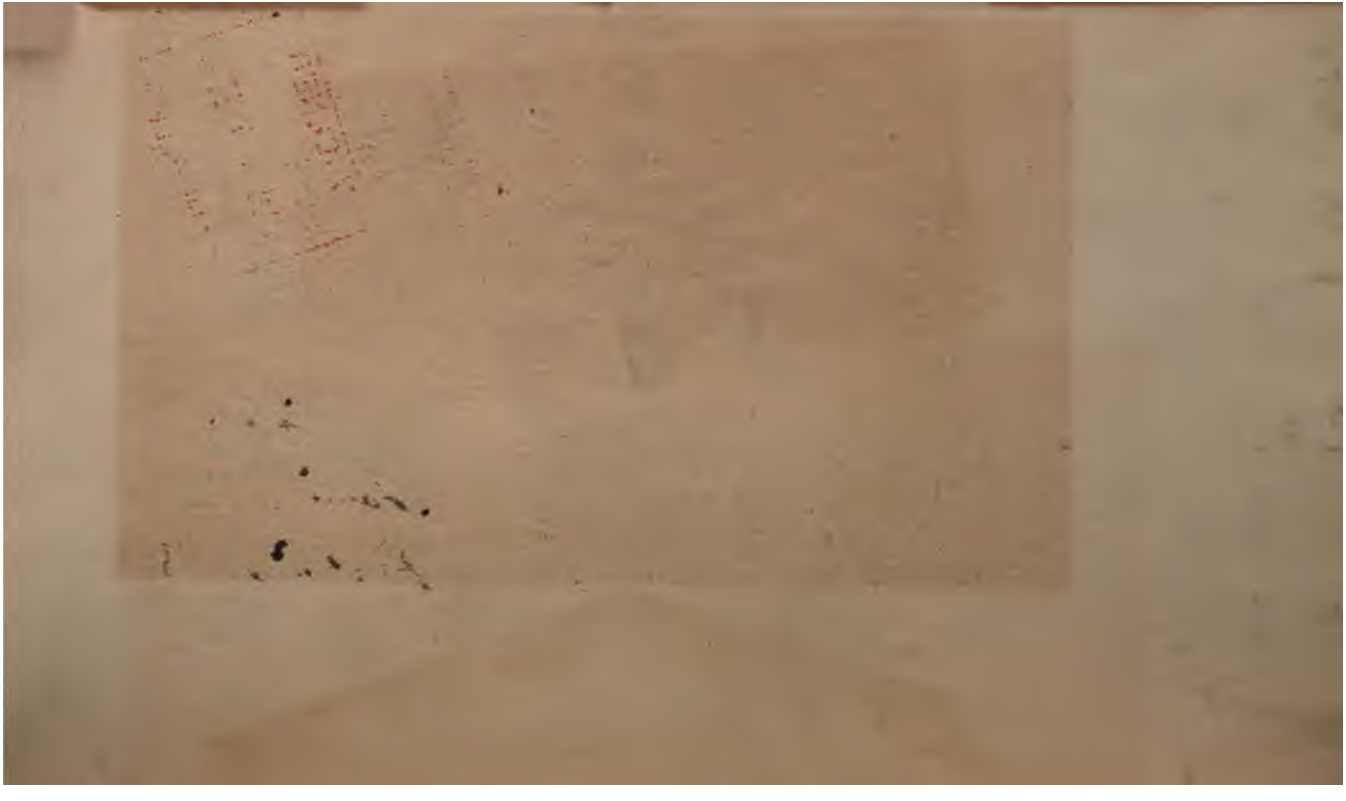
Hurrah! the foes are moving. Hark to the mingled din
Of fife, and steed, and trump, and drum, and roaring culverin!
The fiery Duke is pricking fast across St. André's plain,
With all the hireling chivalry of Guelders and Almayne.
Now by the lips of those ye love, fair gentlemen of France,
Charge for the golden lilies now upon them with the lance!
A thousand spurs are striking deep, a thousand spears in rest,
A thousand knights are pressing close behind the snow-white crest;
And in they burst, and on they rushed, while, like a guiding star,
Amidst the thickest carnage blazed the helmet of Navarre.

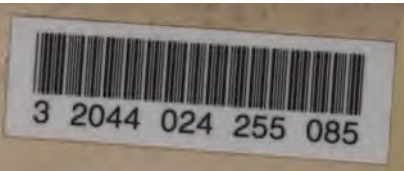
Now, God be praised, the day is ours! Mayenne hath turned his rein,
D'Aumale hath cried for quarter, the Flemish Count is slain,
Their ranks are breaking like thin clouds before a Biscay gale;
The field is heaped with bleeding steeds, and flags, and cloven mail;
And then we thought on vengeance, and all along our van,
"Remember St. Bartholomew," was passed from man to man;
But out spake gentle Henry then, "No Frenchman is my foe;
Down, down with every foreigner, but let your brethren go."
Oh! was there ever such a knight in friendship or in war,
As our sovereign lord, King Henry, the soldier of Navarre.

Ho! maidens of Vienna,—ho! matrons of Luzerne,
Weep, weep, and rend your hair for those who never shall return.
Ho! Philip, send for charity, thy Mexican pistoles,
That Antwerp monks may sing a mass for thy poor spearmen's souls.
Ho! gallant nobles of the League, look that your arms be bright;
Ho! burghers of St. Génévière, keep watch and ward to-night;
For our God hath crushed the tyrant, our God hath raised the slave,
And mocked the counsel of the wise and the valour of the brave.
Then glory to his holy name, from whom all glories are;
And glory to our sovereign lord, King Henry of Navarre.

END OF VOL. I.







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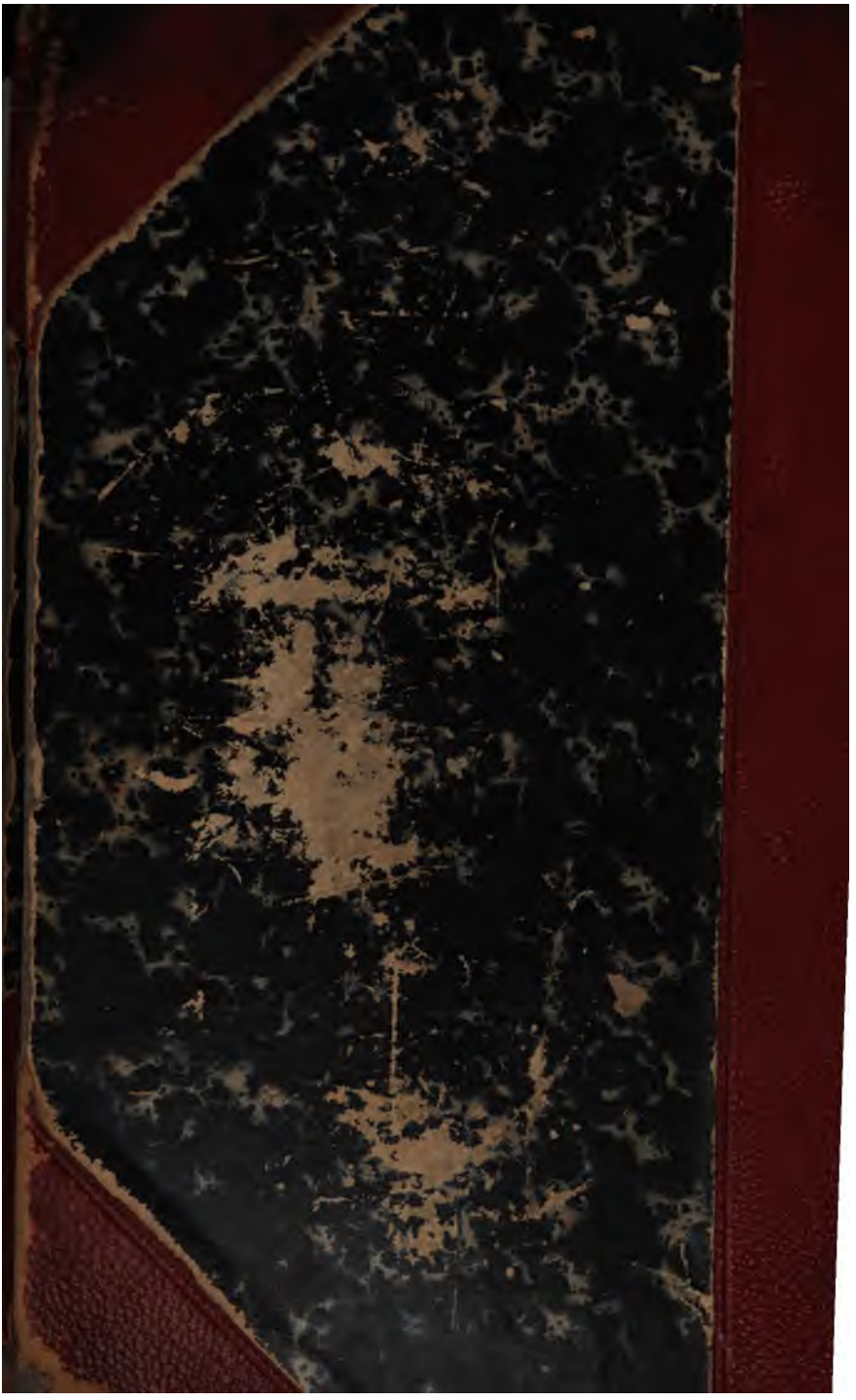
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